CREATION MYTHS OF THE WORLD

AN ENCYCLOPEDIA, SECOND EDITION



DAVID ADAMS LEEMING

CREATION MYTHS OF THE WORLD

DAVID A. LEEMING

Greenwood
PUBLISHING GROUP

Creation Myths of the World

Creation Myths of the World

An Encyclopedia

Second Edition

Volume I: Parts I–II

Volume II: Parts III–V

David A. Leeming

ABC CLIO

Santa Barbara, California • Denver, Colorado • Oxford, England

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Leeming, David Adams, 1937–
Creation myths of the world : an encyclopedia / David A. Leeming. — 2nd ed.
p. cm.
Rev. ed. of: Encyclopedia of creation myths. c1994.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 978-1-59884-174-9 (hard copy : alk. paper) — ISBN 978-1-59884-175-6 (ebook) 1. Creation—Comparative studies—Encyclopedias. I. Leeming, David Adams, 1937– Encyclopedia of creation myths. II. Title.
BL325.C7L44 2009
202'.203—dc22 2009021244

14 13 12 11 10 1 2 3 4 5

This book is also available on the World Wide Web as an eBook.
Visit www.abc-clio.com for details.

ABC-CLIO, LLC
130 Cremona Drive, P.O. Box 1911
Santa Barbara, California 93116-1911

This book is printed on acid-free paper ♾

Manufactured in the United States of America

For Morgan and Brooklyn.

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Preface

This book is composed of several distinct parts that are nevertheless intricately related. The introduction provides the context and the parameters of the book. It defines myth generally and creation myths specifically, outlining the different types of cosmogonies.

Part I is a detailed discussion of the basic creation myth types. The use of these types in this book owe much to the work of earlier writers, particularly that, for instance, of the mythologist Joseph Campbell, and three writers who have contributed important works specifically to the field of creation mythology: the psychologist Marie-Louise von Franz, the religious studies scholar Mircea Eliade, and, especially, another religious studies scholar, Charles H. Long. The myths referred to in this section can be found fully retold in Part Two.

Part II is a comprehensive collection of creation myths from around the world. Some are highly complex, some exist now only in fragments. The myths are arranged alphabetically by culture. In each entry the culture is identified briefly, the myth is told and categorized by basic type. A brief commentary, where appropriate, is included, stressing when possible the cultural significance of the myth. Sources and suggested further readings are then listed, followed by a list of terms pointing the reader not only to the essays in Part One, but to the articles in Parts Three and Four.

The articles in **Part III** expand on themes and motifs that are frequently associated with creation myths around the world, themes such as the dismemberment of a world parent, the presence of animals in creation myths, the Flood as an aspect of creation, and the place of goddesses in creation myths. These articles should provide the reader with a deeper understanding of creation myths in general, of significant relationships between myths of various cultures, and of the particular creation myths themselves in which the themes in question play significant roles.

Part IV is a glossary of significant figures and terms that are found in the myths and in the discussions of the myths. Some of the articles in the glossary are expanded background information that will provide further understanding of many of the most complex creation myths and the cultures out of which they emerged.

Part V is composed of a series of charts categorizing the various myths according to types. An annotated bibliography referring to the sources and further readings, and an index follow.

Full reference citations for works referred to by page number in parentheses or at the end of each myth in Part II may be found in the bibliography.

Introduction

The Meaning of Myth

In common usage the word "myth" refers to narratives or beliefs that are untrue or merely fanciful; the stories that make up national or ethnic mythologies describe characters and events that common sense and experience tell us are impossible. Nevertheless, all cultures celebrate such myths and attribute to them varying degrees of literal or symbolic *truth*. Myths are retold orally from generation to generation and/or preserved in sacred collections or scripture, often believed to have emanated from a deity or deities.

Myths are not only the stories of so-called dead cultures and religions such as those of the Ancient Greeks, Romans, Norse, or Egyptians. Extraordinary and supernatural sacred narratives are central to Christians, Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and Taoists, as well as to people of animist traditions to which the terms "pagan" and "primitive" have traditionally been applied with a negative connotation. Naturally, a story that is true in some sense for one culture is purely, in the common usage, myth to another. People of the Abrahamic religions (Jews, Christians, Muslims) have no trouble describing the impossible acts of the African trickster Ananse or the Native American Spider Woman as myths, but their own stories, they say, are God's truth, not myths. The animist, or for that matter the Hindu, the Jew, or the Buddhist, however, might reasonably call the Christian story of Jesus' resurrection a myth: according to common sense and experience people do not rise from the dead. By the same token, the Night Journey of Mohammad from Mecca to Jerusalem on a flying horse can reasonably be considered a myth, as can the Jewish story of the Passover, the Hindu story of the creation of Ganesha, the elephant-headed god, or the story of the Buddha's conception by way of a white elephant in a dream.

What, then, is the relation of myths to reality? How are myths alive—even true and not false—wheresoever they come from? Clearly myths have had significant power

to move people. Societies have defined themselves by, committed themselves to, and even been willing to kill and be killed in support of their myths. There are, of course, fundamentalists in all religions who insist on the literal reality of their myths. But there are others who see in their sacred narratives not literal truth but metaphorical and symbolic power and significance without which their lives would become meaningless, rootless, or even intolerable. In either case, a culture's myths are true to the culture because they are embedded in its psyche, as much a part of its reality as its people and its physical landscape. This truth applies to all sacred narratives, whether those of the ancient Celts, Norse, Greeks, and Egyptians, those of the indigenous peoples of North America and elsewhere, or those of the Hindus, Christians, Jews, and Muslims, or the contemporary practitioners of Wicca.

Perhaps the best way to understand myths is to consider the human role in life itself. It might well be said that what defines us as humans is our need to imitate reality, to tell stories. Of all creatures it seems likely that only we are capable of considering what Aristotle defined as *mythos*, or plot—that which has a beginning, a middle, and an end. In terms of our individual lives, our national and cultural lives, and even the planetary and universal existence itself, we see ourselves as travelers on a path from beginning to end. We turn that awareness into stories, whether consciously in religion and art, or unconsciously in dream. A myth is a religious and artistic narrative; it is also a cultural dream.

In our post-Freudian age few people would suggest that dreams are simply untrue stories unworthy of examination. Rather, to the extent that we believe in the unconscious, we see dreams as metaphorical or symbolic constructs that contain truths about the dreamer. If we see myths as cultural dreams, we naturally take them seriously as sources of information about the inner workings—the collective psyche—of the culture in question and, by extension and comparison, about the psyche of the human species as a whole.

It is common practice to treat myths etiologically—that is, as primitive science; explanations of phenomena that humans of earlier civilizations could not otherwise explain. To some extent, of course, this is true of myths such as that of the rape of Persephone by the Underworld god Hades and her return to her mother Demeter, a myth that perhaps once explained the seasons. But even if myths such as this one may represent limited scientific understanding, they can be true psychologically and metaphorically as cultural responses to such questions as life after death, the role of the sexes, and the meaning of loss and death itself. To quote History of Religion scholar Charles Long, "The myth is a true story . . . Alongside of the rational it [myth] remains a mode through which we have to access the real. There are human experiences on the personal and cultural levels that can only be expressed in symbolic forms" (Long, 11–13). If we can not understand the meaning of life rationally, we can attempt to do so metaphorically by telling a story; "It was like" or "It was as if," are approaches that come naturally to us as human beings. By responding to the mysteries of the world

around us in story we become a significant part of that world. We fulfill our role in creation that our consciousness and sense of plot demand that we fulfill; we make creation conscious of itself. We have to make myths—personal myths in dreams and in art and in family lore and cultural myths in our larger social contexts, especially in our religions. It could be said that if we do not make myths we lose our usefulness in the interrelated web of creation.

Each culture springs to life in its own way, in its own place, and develops its own priorities, and it is important to remember that myths, on one level, are cultural rather than universal statements. The universality of myth emerges, however, when we make comparisons between mythologies. Through comparison certain constants appear. Most mythologies—which is to say, religions—have deities, most have heroes who perform certain ritual deeds, many of which are found in most mythologies—the quest, the descent to the Underworld, for example. Universal patterns or common motifs in mythology have been called archetypal, that is, reflective of psychological tendencies that are common to the human species as a whole. At the archetypal level a story such as the resurrection of Jesus becomes true—freed of the parochial restrictions of the merely local—when compared to other resurrection stories such as those of Osiris or Persephone. Through comparison, the truth of the story is seen to lie in the concept of resurrection rather than in the individuals who are resurrected. Having said that, it is again important to remember that archetypes—those of the hero's quest or the supreme deity or the trickster or the Flood, or creation itself—only take on life and meaning when they are clothed in cultural particularity.

Creation Myths

No cultural dream is more universal or clothed in more particular cultural clothes than the creation myth. Creation myths are as ubiquitous as our need to know where we came from, where and how we began the plot; the overall *mythos,* which is not only our individual and family lives, but our cultural lives as well. In the classic psychoanalytic passage, the patient searching for self-identity begins with an examination of the beginnings, the details of birth, the details of parentage, and the details of early treatment. The same process applies to cultures in search of identity and significance. Psychologist and mythologist Marie-Louise von Franz speaks of the creation myth as "an awakening toward consciousness" (24). Who were our primal parents? we ask in the myths; where did we come from? Answers to these questions are necessary if we are to know who we are. But as no one was there to see the beginning we are left with the necessity of telling stories, of constructing metaphorical and symbolic narratives clothed in the elements of real life experience—fathers, mothers, sexuality, birth, death, the shortcomings of human beings. Naturally, creation myths, like all myths, are colored deeply by particular understandings formed by particular environments and particular dominant activities. The creator-father god of a patriarchal warrior culture

creates in one way, while the creator-mother earth goddess of an agricultural society creates in another.

In addition to reveling or expressing essential elements of particular cultures, creation myths, when compared, reveal certain universal or semi-universal patterns or motifs. The first and most important of these is the fact that the creation myth always expresses the given culture's, and, by extension, the overall human place and role in time and space; in the world and the cosmos. The historian of religion Mircea Eliade, who has written extensively on creation myths, calls the creation myth the "narration of a sacred history," the process by which chaos becomes cosmos. The creation myth is a *cosmogony,* a composite of the sense conveyed by the Greek words *kosmos* (order) and *genesis* (birth). It is the most important story we have to tell, so everyone—that is, every culture—tells one. When a culture dreams its creation story, as it were, it particularizes the universal; it tells how ultimate reality takes particular form in the elements of the world we know, whether that world is a pueblo of the American southwest or a village along the Nile in ancient Egypt. Creation takes place at the center of the world wherever the given culture believes that center to be, which, in an infinite universe is, in fact, wherever we are. The creation myth is the most important story because it serves as a model for everything we do, for the human act of creation in whatever form it takes—the creating of a family, the destroying of what we do not like, the building of a house, the planting of a field, the making of a work of art.

Part I

The Creation Myth Types

A comparison of the world's creation myths reveals basic creation types. Commentators on these myths have categorized them in different ways from various perspectives. Anthropologists have long recognized such dominant cultural motifs as creation from nothing, emergence creations, and earth-diver creations. Psychologists recognize myths as reflections of universal psychological realities. The Jungian scholar Marie Louise von Franz, for instance, sees creation myths as "preconscious processes about the origins of human consciousness" (von Franz, 11). She establishes such types as "creation as an awakening towards consciousness", creation as "accidental action", creation as "movement from below to above" and the motif of "twin creators," all reflecting psychological states. The eminent religion scholar Mircea Eliade understands creation myths as symbolic descriptions of a reality in which all creative acts are "paradigmatic models" (Eliade, *Sacred*, 45); reflections of an eternally repeated return to an identifying center or absolute reality. A categorization of creation myths that, in effect, absorbs anthropological, psychological, and religious approaches is outlined by religion scholar Charles Long in his now-classic *Alpha: The Myths of Creation.* Long's types provide a clear basis for approaching creation myths. They include creation from nothing (*ex nihilo*), creation from a preexisting, undifferentiated or chaotic state represented by primal elements or sometimes by a primal object such as a cosmic egg (*Chaos*), creation from the union, separation, division or sacrifice—even dismemberment—of world parents (*World Parents*), creation by way of a hole in the earth (*emergence*), and creation by means of diving into the depths of the primordial waters (*earth-diver*). There are, of course, many variations and combinations of these basic types, and the myths representing the five types

make use in varying degrees of certain universal themes and motifs: the creation of humans, the creator twins, the trickster creator, for example. Many creation myths, regardless of basic type, contain the story of the failed creation or the fall of humanity and a subsequent Flood and re-creation. These themes and motifs are discussed individually in the essays of Part III and in the Glossary entries of Part IV.

We have already suggested that individual creation myths, like all myths, can be approached as *cultural dreams.* It can also be said that when we study myths of certain types, such as the various types of creation myths, we are, almost by definition, examining more universal *archetypal dreams.* There is, in short, a universal ex nihilo creation myth (an ur myth) that emerges from a study of ex nihilo myths as a type, and the same applies to the other major types of creation myths. Again, it must be understood at the outset that no myth exists without cultural clothes. The ur myths of which we speak now are hypothetical constructs based on the comparison of cultural expressions and can only be used in a kind of thought experiment that allows us to analyze the significance and meaning of creation myths as a whole or particular types of creation mythology.

Ex Nihilo Creation

The central fact of the creation from nothing, or ex nihilo, creation myth type is a supreme deity, existing alone in a pre-creation emptiness or void, who consciously creates an organized universe on his own. Thus the God of the Hebrews in Genesis simply decides to create, and He "made Heaven and Earth." The ex nihilo creation is firmly imbedded in the collective psyche in the parts of the world dominated by the monotheistic religions; Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, religions centered on an all-powerful supreme deity who embodies in himself all of the elements assigned to various deities in polytheistic systems.

But the ex nihilo creation is not limited to the three Abrahamic religions and is not the exclusive product of the monotheistic cultures. In fact, it is ubiquitous in all parts of the world and is arguably the most common of the five types. It existed in ancient Egypt, in the ancient *Rig Veda* of India, and is present to this day in the mythologies of many animistic cultures of Africa, Asia, Oceania, and North America.

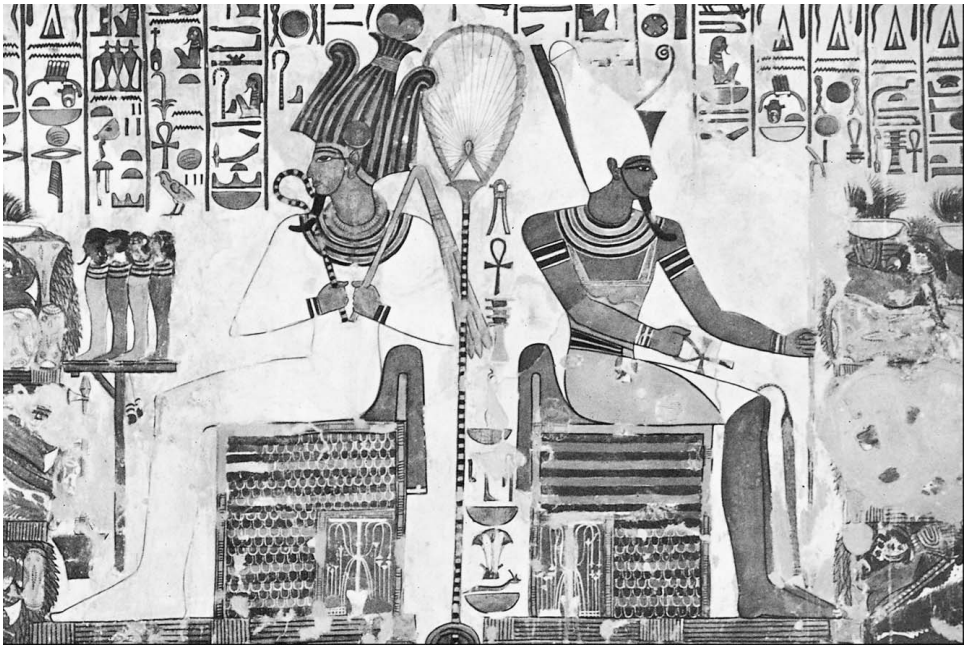
The mythological ancestors of the ex nihilo creator are, in all likelihood, the sky gods of earlier religions; the personifications of the elements of nature we associate with the heavens. The ex nihilo creator often maintains characteristics of ancient storm and weather gods and embodies the power of the sun. For example, the creator of Genesis can divide seas and inundate the world with flood waters. The creator gods of Egypt are closely associated with the blazing desert sun. The ex nihilo creator also owes something of his personality to the ancient role of the father god who fertilizes the earth. The creative acts of the Zuni sky father or the *Rig Veda* creator are acts of fecundation.

At the beginning of the ex nihilo ur myth the creator is introduced in his pre-creative state, sometimes composed of

several parts but always without a mate. Kiho, the Tuamotuan version of the Polynesian creator, "lived alone in the emptiness under Havaiki, or nonland. His only company was his double, his Activating Self." The Mariana Island creator, Na Arean was alone in the beginning, "a cloud that floats in nothingness." The Tahitian creator, Taaroa, like the Indian Purusha of the *Rig Veda*, was always the universe itself. For the Bantu speaking Fan people of Africa "In the beginning there was only Nzame (God), made up of three parts: Nzame, Mebere, and Nkwa." For the Christian gospeler John, in the beginning there was "the Word"—the Logos, the essence of another three-part God. For the Mayans in Mesoamerica, in the beginning there were only the creators, Tepeu and Gukumatz, the Feathered Serpent, in the void. In the Indian *Chandogya Upanishad*, "There was only Non-Being in the beginning." The Inupiat (Eskimo) creator, Raven, "woke up in Heaven and suddenly became aware of himself" in the primeval darkness. "Gradually he examined himself, feeling his mouth, nose, ears, and other body parts. He became aware, too, of the little bump on his forehead that later would become his beak." Among the Central Asian Chukchee, Raven was "self-created." The Winnebago creator Earth Maker "came to consciousness and realized he was alone." The Marshall Islands creator Lowa, the uncreated, suddenly realized he was alone. The Amazonian Uitoto myth maker suggests that first there was only a vision, an illusion that affected the supreme being, Nainema, who at that time was himself the illusion. Nothing else existed.

The person of the supreme deity creator who existed before existence teases the human mind and leads to inevitable questions: where did the ex nihilo creator come from and how did he come about in the void, what was there before there was anything? These are, of course, unanswerable questions; the human mind is a product of existence and inevitably fails in its attempt to imagine pre-existence. Jinasena, the Jain sage, suggests that people who think of a creator are misled. "If God is the creator, where was He before creation and how could a non-material being make anything so material as this world?" The composer of the Indian *Rig Veda* asks, "If in the beginning there was neither Being nor Non-Being, neither air nor sky, what was there? Who or what oversaw it? What was it when there was no darkness, light, life, or death? We can only say that there was the One, that which breathed of itself deep in the void, that which was heat and became desire and the germ of spirit." In short, the ex nihilo creator always was; he is not controlled by time or by any previous creation. As the Tierra del Fuego people say, he was the "forever existing." For those who acknowledge him he is, in fact, ultimate reality, and the potential for material creation exists only within him and has to emerge from him. When the Egyptian creator god of Heliopolis, Atum or Ptah in his form as Khepri, comes into being "being itself came into being."

Material creation can emerge from the ex nihilo creator in a myriad of ways. The creator can create from his mouth by way of saliva, from his genitals as semen, even from his anus as fecal matter. The Egyptian Atum created by masturbating



Egyptian tomb painting and hieroglyphics depicting the gods Osiris and Atum receiving offerings. Osiris, the god of the dead and underworld, was a principal deity, also associated with agriculture and fertility. Atum was worshipped by many in early Egypt as the father of the gods. (Corel)

or, as some texts claimed, by expectorating. In some northern myths the popular trickster-creator Raven defecated the world into existence. The Boshongo creator vomited the universe into existence. The Bagobo of the Philippines say that the creator, who lived in the sky, was white. He constantly "polished his whiteness and he made the earth out of the dried skin that came from this polishing." The African Fon tell of their mother-creator Mawu, who created everything from the back of the rainbow serpent Aido Hwedo, the principle of motion that keeps the celestial bodies moving. The creator can create from his mind as thought or word. In some places in Egypt the original god created himself by calling out his own name. The Hebrew creator said "let there be light" and there was light. The Maori creator, Io, was alone and "inactive." So as to overcome the inactivity he used words, "calling on darkness to become 'light-possessing darkness'." The Islamic-influenced Swahili creator has always existed; he is "beyond birth and death" and he creates by words: "He creates by merely speaking." For instance, "Let there be light, he said, and, of course, there was light." The Samoan creator existed in empty space before the universe had form. He told a rock to split and it did, and hit the rock and it gave birth to Earth and Sea. "In the beginning there was only Wakonda, the Great Spirit, and all things—plants, animals, and humans—were spirits in his mind," say the Omaha storytellers. The

Laguna Pueblo Thinking Woman made thoughts and the names of things, and thought things into existence. The Indian absolute, Brahman, the Self-Existent, in the *Laws of Manu,* thought of the waters, and they were." The Lenape Indian creator had a vision of existence as a world and brought that vision to life by thinking about each of its elements.

An important stage in the ex nihilo myth is the creation of humans. The Creek Indians of North America say that the Creator decided to make the animals to enjoy his newly created world, that the animals felt a lack of purpose in their lives, so the creator made humans for the animals to teach and assist in learning to survive. The Hebrew god, like many others, made humans in Genesis 1 "male and female . . . in His image" and gave them guardianship over his creation (In Genesis 2 the story is different; we are told that Eve was created from one of Adam's ribs). In a Pawnee Indian myth, the creator, who was originally Space itself, recognized the need to populate his newly created Earth and had Evening Star marry Morning Star. The couple produced Mother of Humanity while another couple, Sun and Moon, produced Father of Humanity. These were the first people. In Africa, the Maasai creator Enkai created the first humans out of a tree that he split into three parts, resulting in the Maasai father, the Kikuyu father, and the Kamba father. The Tahitian creator, Taaroa, made the first man, Ti'I, out of the earth, that is, out of himself, and he created the first woman, Hina, as well; "she could see backwards and forwards." The creator of the Mapuche of Chile first made a world and then people imbued with his spirit—first a woman and then, as her companion, a man. Frequently the first people are children of an incestuous relationship among the gods. A myth of the Yolugu Aborigines of Northeast Arnhemland in Australia explains that the people are descendants of such a relationship between a brother and sister with oversized sexual organs who created the Yolugu world as they roamed about in an ancient dream time.

In many cases the seemingly perfect world created ex nihilo by the supreme deity is undermined by an inherent evil or mischievous force that somehow enters creation. The Devil enters the Garden of Eden in the form of a serpent in the Hebrew myth of Genesis and corrupts Adam and Eve by convincing them to eat a certain fruit forbidden them by the creator. The Central African Ngombe people are among the many peoples who also tell of the first woman being corrupted by a devil figure, this one a hairy figure whose handsomeness when she shaves his body leads to her seduction and the fall of humanity. The second wife of the Tanzanian Nyamwezi creator brought death into the world when she disobeyed her husband. The eastern Congo Baluba creator, Fidi Mkullu, was threatened by a trickster-devil figure, Kadifukke, who claimed that he had been born directly of the earth, that he had not been created by Fidi Mkullu. The creator was never able to completely defeat his enemy.

The struggle between good and evil in the universe is always reflected in the human world, where in the myth, evil often prevails and the humans become corrupt. The Andean Aymaran creator Kun becomes furious with his people.

So does the Yahweh of the Hebrew Genesis and the creator of the Bushmen. The Bantu Fang high god Nzambe had created a creature, Fam, in his image, but Fam became arrogant and eventually decided to stop worshipping Nzambe. "Let Nzame be where he is; I rule here," he sang. The Lenape Indian creator's emissary on Earth was defeated by an evil spirit, and Earth became "a place of turmoil." The Mande people of West Africa were plagued by the endless struggle between the good Faro and the evil Pemba. Among the Chilean Mapuche a similar struggle between two serpent spirits had a terrible effect on human life. The Mayan creators had made humans out of wood. These humans "walked and talked and made more of themselves, but they were too inflexible, too mindless, and without inner being. They did not think of their makers, and they caused troubles on Earth." Madumda, the California Pomo Indian creator, created people, but in time they "began to misbehave, killing each other and not caring well enough for their children."

The reaction of the ex nihilo creator—and, it should be said, of all types of creators—is strikingly similar. The creator sends a flood or something equally catastrophic to cleanse the world of evil. The Pomo creator punished his creation with a flood (and later with fire, ice, and wind). The South American Ipurina creator, Mayuruberu, presumably angry at humanity, caused a huge pot of boiling water in the sun to overflow and flood the earth. The Andean Aymaran creator used an "ice flood." The impious fourth world created by the Mesoamerican Toltec gods was destroyed by flood, an earlier one having been destroyed by fire. The Mayan *Popol Vuh* reports that the gods destroyed the first humans in a flood, the few survivors having been chased by the animals into the woods, where they became monkeys.

In order that human life might continue, it is usual to find at least two people who are saved from the flood. The culture hero Faro of the Mande people is a personification of the River Niger. He floods the world to destroy the evil forces of his brother Pemba, leaving the good people to live. The Lenape creator sent a great flood to cleanse his creation, but the culture hero/spirit Nanapush carried a few humans and animals in his shirt and climbed a cedar tree on a mountain top, thus avoiding the waters until he could build a raft from the cedar wood. The Hebrew Genesis tells us that Noah and his family were saved in an ark when Yahweh sent the flood to cleanse the world of the evil descendants of Adam and Eve. Before that, the Sumerians and the Babylonians had reported in the Gilgamesh epic that when the gods flooded the world they had allowed Ziusudra/Utnapishtim to survive with his wife in an ark. The Wyot Indians of California say that Old Man in the heavens created people, but they turned out all furry, so he decided to get rid of them with a flood. But Condor found out about this and made a basket into which he got with his sister and was saved.

The result of the salvation of a few is the second chance for humanity; a new creation. Utnapishtim/Ziasudra and his wife were the parents of a new humanity under a covenant with the mother goddess. Noah's sons fathered the future



The Creation. One of six panels illustrating the six days of the creation of the world. This panel represents the creation of the sun and moon and stars. Florentine woodcut, late 15th century. (© Bettmann/CORBIS)

races of humankind under a new covenant with Yahweh. The Lenape hero Nanapush decided to "make use of powers given him by the Creator to create a new world." The Wyot Condor decided to mate with his sister, and the first of the new people were born. "They looked just right, and they made more people. Old Man in the heavens was happy." Sometimes the creator simply makes completely new post-flood humans. The Tlingit creator-trickster Raven "made new humans out of leaves and the old humans became stones."

In order to interpret the universal dream that is behind the many ex nihilo creation myths, we need to ask ourselves how the myth speaks to us, what it means to us outside of the particular cultural contexts. The Hebrew god means something particular to the Hebrews and their Jewish descendants in the context of Jewish history. The Zuni father god means something particular to Zunis in the context of their understanding of their physical and spiritual place in the world. Those gods are but two of many embodiments of the concept of supreme deity in the larger world dream that is the universal ex nihilo creation myth. It is to that concept and the other primary concepts of the ex nihilo ur myth that we must look for cross cultural or universal meaning. Polynesians created the Polynesian ex nihilo creation myths, Sumerians created the Sumerian ex nihilo myth, and Fang people the Fang ex nihilo myth, but the ur ex nihilo creation myth that is revealed by a comparison of all ex nihilo myths is the product of a significant element of the collective mind—a product of our cross cultural human experience.

The ex nihilo creation myth begins with a vision of the creator alone in the void—the emptiness of space or nothingness of pre-creation, pre-existence. The very fact that, unlike the creators of other creation myth types, he is alone, would seem to be significant. By placing the potential for creation within one being, a human longing for meaningfulness versus randomness is satisfied. The Supreme Being containing the elements of all earlier deities is the spiritual or psychological version of the scientist's longed for unified field theory to explain all of existence. As human beings, possibly alone and vulnerable in the universe, we long for a universal axis mundi, a center that gives us meaning and significance. Like the Hebrews who envisioned Yahweh or the Egyptians who discovered Ptah, the ex nihilo followers as a collective long for a powerful parent who creates with a purpose. In the ex nihilo context, this

parent is usually "Our Father," whereas in the emergence creation to be considered later "Our Mother" is perhaps a more appropriate model.

The fact that Our Father lacks a mate and is notably alone in many cases—especially those of the monotheists—suggests a source outside of the generative cycle of birth, life and death; a source that is eternal and that by so being provides some sort of immortality to his creation. This vision of the ex nihilo creator is expressed best intellectually in non-personal concepts such as the Vedic/Hindu Brahman, the essence of existence that is neither male nor female and is everywhere and nowhere. For most ex nihilists, however, an "Our Father" is a more comforting idea.

The Supreme Being typically exists in the Void, a difficult concept for mortal humans to comprehend. Perhaps empty space is the closest we can come to a vision of no-thing-ness. The ex nihilo creator creates from nothing, and "nothing" is a concept that negates time and place. If Our Father existed and created in the Void, he presents us with the vision of a possibility of making something of nothing, a vision that is related to but not the same as the vision of the Creation from Chaos myth to be studied later. More important, since the Void is timeless and without boundaries, he presents us with a vision of eternity, possibly suggesting eternal life.

The Supreme Being who exists as eternal potential energy in the Void seems suddenly to awaken. In his aloneness he longs for something more, the way a baby one day seems suddenly to awaken to his surroundings. The deity takes on a personality and finds a way of materializing elements of his creative desire for company. In so doing he becomes a creature of our sometimes childish imagination. How does a mateless being create from within himself? Masturbation is an obvious solution, spitting, vomiting, and defecating are others. All of these acts in children are primitive models for creation. The Deity's awakening into the possibility of creating from within himself is a metaphor for our awakening into consciousness, into our possibilities as creators. The child is proud of his feces and bodily fluids. The products of the child's body are creative steps on the way to more fully planned creative acts that mirror the planned creation of the creator deity.

The deity also creates by word, thought, and touch. In so doing he speaks to our sense of the crucial necessity of being creative. Humans are driven to create, to mirror the creator in thought, word, and touch. We imitate reality, imitate creation, imitate the creator—first in our thoughts, then in the various forms by which we make our thoughts and imaginings concrete. We paint and write and build, not only for utilitarian purposes but because we have to express creativity, because that is what humans—as opposed to other animals—do. From the first instances of painting in Paleolithic caves, we have been driven to do what only we do; we have been driven by an overwhelming need to make creation conscious of itself. And our creations are modeled on the creator's plan or on the assumption that the creator had a plan. The Islamic Sultan's garden, the cathedral, the city center, the idealized heroic

statue, the portrait, the abstract painting are all re-presentations of the consciously planned creation of the Supreme Deity.

Once the creator has completed the realization of his consciously developed plan for the created world, usually after he has established the sky, the earth, the plants, seas, rivers, and mountains, and even the animals, he realizes that something is missing. The paradise is complete, but something—a tension, a provocation, an element of the creator himself—is needed to give life to the creation. This is where we come in. The Supreme Deity is said to have created a being "in his image"—the human—to watch over his creation, thus, in fact, establishing the fact that humans, the creators of the story, see the *god* as being like *them*. In this assumption, humans inject the element of pride into creation and both undermine its perfection and provide it with the energy of life. If we are made in the image of the god we can act like the god. So enters the devil figure who personifies the sensuality, the roving imagination, the duality, the ambiguity, and the imperfection of humans—the qualities that are precisely the elements that characterize their greatest creative works. The devil infects the paradise of the eternal one's creation and endows it with the possibility of new creative powers and, of course, also with the power to destroy. The price we pay for these powers is death, death being a necessary component of the procreative process by which we participate in the life cycle and also part of the related process by which we make cities, objects of art, and other creative forms that mirror our image of the original planned creation of the ex nihilo creator.

But to "Our Father" all of this adds up not to the healthy development of his children into adulthood, individuality, and creativity, but to disobedience and corruption. The natural instinct of the defied patriarch is to punish the wrongdoers, those who defy him even as they imitate him and his creation. So comes the flood that will wipe the slate clean and provide the possibility of a new creation. The waters are, of course, a model for the waters of birth and the ark is the placenta of rebirth. Chosen representatives of an obedient humanity become the fetuses of that rebirth and will participate in a new creation, the success of which, of course, remains to be seen. The assumption of the obedient descendants of the chosen is that the Supreme Deity is still there controlling his creation.

Creation from Chaos

In the creation from chaos myth the potential for creation already exists in some form of material that is eternal, much as the Supreme Deity-Creator exists eternally in the ex nihilo myth. In short, when the creator begins the act of creation, creative material containing the potential for creation is already there. The creative material does not emerge from the creator himself or herself. To quote Charles Long, "Even in its indeterminate form of chaos, the possibilities of a cosmos were always present" (110). The material of potentiality may be an undefined disorganized combination of darkness and, often, water, sometimes directly labeled "Chaos" or it may be more

defined representations of chaos such as bits of clay or other forms of earth, a primal mound, or, most frequently, a cosmic egg. The ex nihilo creator creates from himself—from scratch, as it were. The creation from chaos creator gives form to already existing material. It must be said at the outset that the line between the ex nihilo and creation from chaos creations is sometimes thin—even invisible—and that in such cases the categorization of myths is highly subjective, dependent more on tone and feeling than on specific elements. The problem derives from the fact that the ex nihilo creator can exist in a physical context such as darkness and water but not depend on that material for his creative acts, whereas in the creation from chaos myth the assumption is that the material existed before the creator and will be directly used in the process of creation of cosmos (order) out of chaos (disorder). The result, inevitably, is a creator who is less powerful, less omnipotent than in the ex nihilo myth. The creator may emerge powerful from the cosmic egg, but the egg existed first, suggesting that even the creator must have a mother—the dark maternal waters of the universal womb.

The creation from chaos myth, then, begins with a form of chaos. The basic stuff of the universe in Chinese myths is the "breath of the universe," a primeval vapor containing *yin* and *yang* principles, a shapeless mass known as the "Great Glory." The Ainu in Japan believed that before the creation there was only a mixture of mud and water. The Yuki Indians of California believed that in the beginning there was foam that wandered around on the surface of fog-covered waters. The Ijaw of Nigeria tell of a table that descended to Earth with a pile of creative earth on it. The California Cahto Indians say that Nagaitcho created the world, beginning by "repairing the old sandstone sky" that obviously existed before he did. The *Kojiki,* a sacred text of Shinto Japan, reports that "there was a time when there was only chaos until Heaven and Earth separated," implying that the conjoined Heaven and Earth was itself chaos waiting to be separated—that is, ordered and differentiated. Chaos for the Inuit Netsilik people was darkness in which undifferentiated animals and people were all the same and talked in the same way. The Mesoamerican Mixtec creation begins with a chaos made up of the earth covered in water and darkness and a sea covered in green slime. The Romans, following the Greek Hesiod, accepted that chaos was a "formless mass" in which everything got in the way of everything else.

Born of this chaos, and making constructive use of it, were creator gods like the Cahto god mentioned above. The pre-Greek myth of the Pelasgians reports that in the beginning the great goddess Eurynome emerged naked from a chaos that was water and sky. She then "divided the waters from the sky so she could dance lonely upon the waves." For the Achomawi of northern California there was only water and a clear sky in the beginning when suddenly a cloud appeared and turned into the creator, Coyote.

The ancient Iranians reported that Yima, the god of fertility, used a golden arrow to pierce the latent but pre-existing earth to make it pregnant with creation. The Ainu creator Kamui decided to use

already existing mud and water to build the world on the back of an already existing huge fish that took in the waters and blew them out to create the ocean tides. Time began for the Mixtec deer god, Puma-Snake, and his wife, Jaguar-Snake when they took human form and tamed the chaos. The Fulani of West Africa say that world was created from a drop of milk that somehow appeared. For the Guarayu-Guarani people of Bolivia, the beginning came when Mbir, the creator-worm, slithered about in pre-existing water and bulrushes and made things. The Haida people of British Columbia say that Raven turned a little island in the chaotic waters into both the Haida home and the larger world. The Inuit Netsilik believe that words were the "most powerful things in those days" of creation and that Hare began things by saying "Day" to create day. The Central Asian Tungus people tell of how their creator used fire to burn part of the primordial sea so that an island—Earth—could emerge.

Soil of some kind is a common way of creating a world—especially in earth-diver myths, but also in many of the creation from chaos myths. The Indian Gond creator, Bhagavan, who sat in the primeval waters on a lotus leaf, used a fleck of dirt to create a crow that would seed the earth. In the Salishan Indian tradition, the Sky Chief, made the earth out of a lump of clay, which he "rolled out like a piece of dough." More often earth—as dust, mud, or especially, and more logically, as clay—is used to create humans. When the Central Asian Altaic creator Ulgen saw mud floating on the primal waters, he saw a human face reflected in the waters and gave it life. The Congolese Efe creator made a man, Baatsi, out of clay, which he covered with skin and filled with blood. Some Inupiat Inuits of Alaska say that Raven made humans out of clay.

One day the creator of the Malagasy people of Madagascar "noticed his daughter making little clay dolls. He liked her dolls so much that he blew life into them and they became human beings." The Polynesian god Tane made woman first out of red clay. The creation of humans in the world's oldest mythology, the Sumerian, is both comic and tragic. The gods decide at a banquet that they need to create beings to serve them. Various gods in their drunken state attempt to create these new beings, but only Enki succeeds in creating new beings that could live and breathe. He does so with clay. It is because of the drunkenness involved in this creation that humans are so weak and burdened with problems.

Humans in the creation from chaos myth are created in other ways as well. The Melanesian Banks Island god Quat carved the pieces of the first humans from trees and then put the pieces together as puppet-like figures. The Ainu creator made the Ainu out of earth and sticks. The Guarani worm creator, Mbir, simply became human. The Haida god Raven heard sounds coming from a clam shell, and then he saw a small face there. Eventually five little people came out of the shell. These were the first humans. The Samoan creator made people out of worms found when he harvested *Fue,* the "people-making plant."

By far, the primary source of creation of the world and of humans in the creation

from chaos myths is the cosmic egg, the favored image of chaos. The cosmic egg or something like it appears in all parts of the world.

Some Dyak people of Borneo have a creation myth in which two birds floated on the primordial waters and produced two giant eggs that became the heavens and Earth. A Baltic myth exists in which a cosmic egg explodes, its yolk becoming the earth, its white the waters, and its shell pieces the sky with the celestial bodies. The Bambara of Mali have a cosmic egg that climbs a tree and falls. In the Banks Islands of the Pacific, the "mother-stone," a type of cosmic egg, breaks open, releasing the creator Quat and his brothers. The cosmic egg for the Mande people of Mali is a pair of seeds. A wedding song of the Tibetan Bon tradition tells of the union of two deities at the beginning of time, a union that resulted in three eggs. A golden egg produced a golden male arrow of life with turquoise feathers. A turquoise egg gave up a turquoise arrow of the female with golden feathers. From a white egg came a golden spindle. The Southern Californian Cupeño have a particularly original cosmic egg that appears hanging in the initial chaos as a bag that opened and released the creators, Coyote and Wild Cat. The Alaskan Kodiak teach that Raven caused a bladder, containing a man and a woman to come down from the heavens and that the man and woman made the bladder into the world. The cosmic egg of the African Dogon people was shaken by seven huge stirrings of the universe, causing a division into two birth sacs, each containing a set of twins who were fathered by the supreme being, Amma, on the maternal egg. An Egyptian variant of the cosmic egg motif has it that the sun god, as primeval power, emerged from the primeval mound, which itself stood in the chaos of the primeval sea. In the Finnish creation epic, the *Kalevala*, the raised knee of Ilmatar, the Mother of the Waters, who floated in the primeval sea, formed a dry spot for a little teal to make a nest. The bird laid six golden eggs and one iron one. When Ilmatar moved her leg, the eggs fell into the sea and broke, the pieces becoming land, sky, stars, and sun. The Pelasgian creation myth of ancient Greece is dominated by a cosmic egg laid by the first being, the earth goddess Eurynome. This egg would eventually hatch the sun, moon, stars, and earth. Also in Greece, the cult of Orphism celebrated an original silver cosmic egg that hatched the androgynous container of all the seeds of life. The Indian creator as Prajapati emerged from a cosmic egg in some versions of his story, as did the "Self-Existent Brahman," whose semen in the waters "became a golden egg, and out of the egg Brahman was born as progenitor of all." The Polynesians of Samoa say that Tagaloa-Langi, the creator, lived in a cosmic egg and that when the egg broke, the pieces of the shell fell into the waters and became the Samoan Islands. Their Polynesian relatives in Tahiti have a similar story in which their creator, Taaroa, the germ of life, whose shell is the universe, broke out of the shell and held part of it up to become the sky.

Cosmic eggs are especially notable for their production of an essential duality in creation. The de facto cosmic egg in Banks Island mythology, the "Mother

Stone", produces the positive creator Quat and his negative brother Tangaro, the Foolish One, who thought he could do what his older brother did but was only able to create imperfectly. In a California Cupeño myth, a mysterious bag, hanging in the primeval sky, produced Coyote and Wildcat, who then struggled for supremacy. The African Dogon eggs give birth to male and female opposites, as does the bladder-egg of the Alaskan Kodiak people. The Finnish cosmic eggs become sky and earth. When the Indian creator Prajapati emerges from the egg the sounds he makes become Earth and the heavens, light and dark. The African world egg is the source of the conflict between the twins, Pemba and Faro, for world domination. In the Orphic tradition of Greece, the silver cosmic egg is the container of an essential duality that affects all aspects of life.

Whether or not there is a cosmic egg involved, we find in the creation from chaos myths a conflict between the drive for order and the opposite drive towards disorder, or chaos. Order is associated with good, disorder with evil. The male Babylonian hero god Marduk must defeat the old chaotic waters represented by the female Tiamat. A Gnostic creation story reveals a cosmic struggle between good and evil, light and darkness. The South American Guarani believe that evil existed with good almost from the beginning. The creator's granddaughter, Karena, became the mother of seven monsters who had to be confronted by the forces of order. The Malagasy of Madagascar say the creator became jealous of Mother Earth because the people loved her and worshipped her rather than him. In Central Asian myths, such as those of the Mongolian, Turkic, and Tungus people there is always a duality in creation, represented by the creator and his devil assistant. Often there is a war between the good and evil forces early in the creative process. The Talmud tells of the war between the creator and certain bad angels. The African Wapangwa express the cosmic war as one between the first humans and the animals. For many Polynesians it is a war in Heaven that is transferred to Earth where the dark side of the male Ti'i is tempered by the good feminine force represented by Hina.

In many creation from chaos myths the duality or the disorder contained in



Babylonian Cosmogony, Mighty was he to look upon *1916. (The Stapleton Collection / Art Resource, NY)*

the original chaos is reflected in the human life created by the gods. As in the ex nihilo myth, the humans in the chaos myth are often imperfect. The West African Fulani tell how the early humans were so arrogant that the creator blinded them. The early Gond people of India were punished with a flood. The South American Guarani speak of human life plagued by tricksters and monsters who bring about disorder. Different languages were seen by the African Kono as punishment for the sins of humans.

But even when human failings are evident in the creation from chaos myth the emphasis is on the ultimate establishment of order. Cosmos is formed from chaos. Culture heroes or good gods emerge to confront evil. Aionia is such a hero among the Ainu of Japan. The Banks Island hero is Quat; he establishes order over his chaotic siblings. Among the Polynesians of Tahiti it is the goddess Hina, whose teachings prevent the other gods from destroying chaotic humanity. When the California Cahto creator, Thunder, makes the world, he establishes both good and evil as natural components in an orderly form. For the Gnostics, too, the struggle between good and evil was natural, but Jesus established order through *gnosis*—true knowing. Order for the Inca of South America came through the establishment of the Inca emperor and Inca rule.

The archetypal pattern that emerges from a comparison of creation from chaos myths is more in keeping with a scientific or, some would say, realistic understanding of creation than the pattern that is the ex nihilo ur-myth. The reader who feels uncomfortable with the concept of a creator deity who always existed can perhaps more easily accept the concept of a void that is really not a void at all but a chaotic mass of potential—the Big Bang waiting to happen. Such a concept is implicit in many aspects of human life as we actually experience it.

In some cases the myth is a metaphor for a major historical change, in which an old way, perceived as disorderly or chaotic, is replaced by a new order. Thus, for instance, the Babylonian story *Enuma Elish* is a reflection of the displacement of an agricultural and perhaps matriarchal culture and religion by the new patriarchal and urban order represented by the hero-god Marduk and his city state of Babylon. Or, in a psychological context, such a myth can represent the stage of pre-consciousness in which the potential for full consciousness or self-awareness already exists.

Another example of the chaos to cosmos concept exists in the experience of the artist. Although some might see in the artist an analogy with the ex nihilo creator, it must also be recognized that the artist works not only in the void that is the canvas or the page but in the chaos that is the world around us. The artist must make order out of that disorder; without the already existing material—material that the artist did not create—art would be impossible. When William Carlos Williams wrote his poem "The Red Wheel Barrow" he created a visual and verbal metaphor to describe this fact.

So much depends
upon
a red wheel
barrow

glazed with rain
water
beside the white
chickens.

—(Litz, *The Collected Poems of William Carlos Williams,* 224)

Not only does the poem remind us of the importance of the world around us but of the importance to the artist of ordering that material in such a way as to turn it into significant information. If Williams had simply written the prose sentence, "So much depends upon a red wheel barrow glazed with rain water beside the white chickens," we would be faced with what is essentially a meaningless statement—a chaotic idea. "So much depends upon it for what?" would be a natural response. But when the poet breaks up the material and re-orders it in lines, he forces us to participate in an ordering process through which we view this apparently mundane material—a wet wheel barrow and some white chickens—as a painting composed of a red wheel, a glazed quality, and whiteness. So much depends on chaos for cosmos, he seems to say. In another sense the poet is reminding us of a fact of nature. We need the unexpected to keep chaos at bay. If we get too used to what is around us and stop considering it, it becomes meaningless—chaotic. To keep chaos ordered we need to constantly experience it in new ways. The artist and we become analogous to the creator god or gods who chose to make order out of the primeval chaos.

Ceremonies are another means by which we overcome the negative power of chaos—the power of disorder. The unwell Navajo sitting in the sand, painting and listening to the shaman singing the creation myth of his people is getting a second chance, a chance to overcome the chaos in his mind or body by re-participating in the original cosmos from chaos process. The same might be said of the participant in the dance ceremonies of various animistic peoples, whose ritual dances hold the chaos of entropy and meaninglessness at bay. The dancing Tewa Indian or Bantu African is creating order out of chaos.

In scientific terms this all makes perfect sense. The struggle between cosmos and chaos, significant information and entropy, is a fact of nature. Whatever is ordered or differentiated tends to go back to non-differentiation or disorder. This applies to machines, bodies, the cosmos itself. So it is that in the creation from chaos myths we find a duality in the created world—a very realistic conflict between order and the pull towards entropy—what in the myths becomes good and evil, light and dark, creator versus undermining force.

From another perspective, whatever form it takes, the primeval chaos can be seen as a feminine principle. Whether the waters, a drop of milk, the primal mound, a mysteriously appearing birth sac, or, most especially, the cosmic egg, the source of creation in the creation from chaos myth is the undifferentiated mother. A creator might create but, as Charles Long suggests, "He does not create from 'nothing,' but from the creative stuff of the feminine structures of being" (119). In the creation from chaos myth the feminine egg definitely comes before the chicken. And, furthermore, the cosmic egg contains all that is, all the opposites: male and female, good and evil.

Often these dualities are represented by twins such as Pemba and Faro of the African Mande people. Sometimes the creator who will mold chaos—the one who will fertilize the mother—is contained in the egg itself, as in the Polynesian myth.

This existence of the dualities from the beginning make the humans of the creation from cosmos myth somehow less to blame for their shortcomings than the supposedly perfect beings formed in the image of the ex nihilo creator who, mateless, skips the cosmic egg maternal stage of creation. So it is that in this type of myth the emphasis is more on how cultures are stabilized in the face of the pull towards disorder—either by a culture hero or direction from above—than on the punishment of evil. The creation from chaos myth is first and foremost a celebration of the human need to make creation conscious of itself by creating cosmos out of chaos, in society and in the psyche, and in so doing to accept the dualities as reality and as the potential for further creativity.

World Parent Creation

The world parent myth involves the breaking apart of a static primeval state. In one form of the world parent myth the beginning consists of the eternal union of the parents, a union that has to be broken in order for creation to take place. Another sort of world parent myth, sometimes a second part of the first, involves a stage of creation in which it is the body of a world parent that is itself separated, usually by an act of dismemberment. The body parts of this sacrificed deity parent actually become the world.

In the first type of world parent myth sexuality and genealogy are crucial elements. The world parents—more often than not, identified as paternal Sky and maternal Earth—are locked in a perfect if somewhat passive union and appear content to remain so. The result is a dark and cramped world where, as in the Celtic myth, "Heaven and Earth were so close that there was little room for creation between them." The Diegueños people of California say that the male sky came down over the female earth, and the creator and his brother were "cramped" between them. The Krachi people of Togo and Ghana tell how in the beginning male Sky lived on top of female Earth and that Man lived between them, but with little room to move. The Gilbert Islanders of Micronesia also say that the creator was cramped—this time in a clam shell, an image that is reminiscent the cosmic egg. A Japanese myth tells how Heaven and Earth were so close that the word "chaos" characterized the space between them. In Greece the original Mother Earth goddess, Gaia, was covered by Ouranos, the Sky, angering the couple's offspring. In the famous Egyptian gender-reversed variation, the female Sky, Nut, and the male Earth, Geb, formed a stultifying union. The Northern Indian Minyong people have a world parent creation myth in which the love-making of the primal female, Earth, and the primal male, Sky, threatened to crush their offspring. The same fear arose among the children of the Polynesian Rangi and Papa (Heaven and Earth) who found themselves in the darkness between the coupling parents.

The logical next step in the world parent creation myth is the necessary and

often violent separation of the parents. One of the children of the Celtic Heaven and Earth separated the pair by castrating the father. The Titan Kronos (Time) did the same thing in Greece, thus expressing the substitution of time for the timeless coupling of his parents. In Egypt Shu (Air) came between the amorous Geb and Nut, leaving Geb's longing phallus reaching up helplessly towards his mate. In the Babylonian myth the god-hero Marduk defeated the chaotic monster Tiamat—the original mother—and separated her body into Heaven and Earth, thus combining both forms of the world parent myth.

The Gilbert Islands creator separated his clam shell home into Sky and Earth. The Krachi say that Man's squirming irritated Heaven so much that he left and went up above, leaving Earth. The Minyong Sky left his Earth wife when a being called Sedi-Diyor hit him hard in the stomach. In Polynesian mythologies one of the children of the world parents separated them by standing on his head and pushing his father off of his mother with his feet as the parents cried out in agony. The Zuni of the American southwest say that "Earth Mother cast off Sky Father and sank in comfort part way into the waters", thus forming islands and other land masses.

As in the Zuni myth just mentioned, the separation of primal parents always results in creativity and order as opposed to passivity and disorder, and to light and space as opposed to darkness in a contained place. Often the post-separation creator is associated with the sun. The Babylonian Marduk, a thunderbolt wielding sun-weather god like Zeus in Greece and Thor in Northern Europe, created a whole ordered universe over which he presided as a general policeman of Babylonian law and order. The separated Dhammai Sky and Earth let light into the world and produced the first humans. In many Polynesian myths the separation of the world parents resulted in light in which "the people were revealed." The Diegueños creators made the four directions and a light—the sun—that rose every day to overcome the darkness. Later, they made hills, valleys, lakes, and people. In Egypt the god Ra became the dominant force in creation, watching over it with his Eye—the sun—the symbol of order, light, and reason. In his dark shell, the Gilbert Islands creator god found a big snail and a little snail living with him, so he made the big one into the sun and the little one into the moon and thus brought light into the world before continuing the creation process. When the Japanese Earth and Heaven were separated, the creators made the passive and active principles, Izanami (Female who Invites) and Izanagi (Male who Invites). These two were the first ancestors and world creators. After the separation of Heaven and Earth, Izanagi became aware of the new light; he "washed his eyes, and the sun and moon were released." At this point the sun goddess Amaterasu became dominant. For the Minyong, a daughter of the separated world parents became the sun—the light of the world—making ordered life possible. Hesiod tells us that after Kronos (Time) castrated his father and thus separated his parents and took over control; he mated with his sister Rhea and, in turn, was separated from her and overpowered by his son Zeus,

who married *his* sister Hera and fathered many of the Greek Olympians, establishing light and order in the world as understood by the Greeks.

The world parent sacrifice-dismemberment motif, as noted earlier, involves the sacrifice and usually the dismemberment of a being who is turned into the various orderly elements of creation, thus becoming, in the literal sense, the world parent. This motif emphasizes an animistic sense of the spiritual source and, therefore, the sacredness of everything around us. When the gods of Vedic India sacrificed the primal man, Purusha, his broken body became the social castes as well as the animals, plants, rituals, and the sacred *Vedas* themselves. From Purusha's mind came the moon, from his eye the sun, from his breath the wind, from his head the sky, from his feet the earth, from his navel the atmosphere. In Chinese mythology, when the first-born, Pangu, died, his breath became the wind and the clouds, his voice thunder, his eyes the sun and moon, his arms and legs the four directions, his blood and semen water, his veins the earth's arteries, his flesh the land, his hair and beard the stars, his bodily hair the plants and trees. The mites on his body became the black-haired people. The Canadian Algonquin Earth Mother died and the creator-culture hero Glooskap created animals, humans, and other elements of nature from her broken body. The Aztecs of Mexico tell of a terrifying giant goddess who was devouring the world until the gods intervened, cutting the goddess in two, and making one part earth and one part sky. Her hair became plant life; her eyes became water, her mouth rivers, her shoulders hills and mountains. Her violent separation led to her literally becoming our ordered world. In a similar fashion, the Babylonian hero Marduk, after defeating and thus separating the primordial chaotic parents, divided the original goddess, Tiamat, " like a shellfish into two parts"—Earth and Sky. Then he established cosmic and earthly order making Tiamat's stomach the path of the sun—a symbol, as always, of light and order. The blood and bones of Tiamat's lover were turned into human beings. In the Norse myth we are told that the gods killed the frost giant Ymir and that "his bones became the mountains and his teeth and jaws became rocks, stones, and pebbles, his skull the sky." The Nez Perce Coyote killed a world-devouring monster and, with the help of his companion, Fox, cut up the monster and made various Native American tribes out of its body parts. From the feet they made the Blackfoot, from the head the Crow and Salishan (Flat Heads). From the monster's blood sprang the Nez Perce people. The son of the Gilbert Islands creator killed his father and made the sun and moon out of his eyes, and placed his spine on end as the axis mundi on the island of Samoa. From the dead body of the monstrous primeval Worm of the Dhammai of Northern India Earth and Sky were rescued so that a new creation could take place. In the Indonesian Ceramese myth, the maiden Hainuwele is murdered in a ritual dance, but her dug up body parts are planted and they grow into Ceramese food staples.

The motif of the planting of a dismembered goddess finds expression in the many corn mother myths of the native

North Americans The Arikara people tell how corn grew from the body of the murdered Corn Mother. The Keresan people of the Southwest tell how Corn Mother planted her heart in the earth, saying that corn would be the milk of her breasts.

The idea of world parents before the separation as well as the single world parent—especially as a monstrous being—before dismemberment or sacrifice, is clearly related to the state of chaos in the creation from chaos type of myth. In the united parents there is the potential for further creation that waits for a catalytic agent. The united parents are much like the cosmic egg waiting to be broken and the offspring caught between give us a perspective on the cramped world of the pre-hatched egg. The monstrous world parent who must be divided up as creative material is also chaotic material waiting to be used for orderly creation. And even the good Corn Mother is a form of unrealized but potential creativity—in effect, a seed waiting to be planted. The superficial difference between the chaos myth and the world parent myth is precisely the existence of the world parents as recognizable anthropomorphic beings as opposed to eggs or even less defined and less differentiated forms.

If myths are cultural dreams, we naturally look for the symbolic meaning of such a phenomena as the conjoined primordial parents. The first thought that comes to mind in connection with this image is the positive ideal of unity, a kind of androgynous union of the genders. The parents are one, and we all strive for unity and for union with something or someone. But union can also be ultimate entropy, the absence of the differentiation necessary for creativity. In this mythical union of the world parents the parents are concerned only with themselves—their act of union. The humans faced with the sexually joined first parents are placed in what is, at least among those influenced by the Freudian view, the psychologically disturbing and even dangerous position of the child observing the sexual act of parents—the so-called "primal scene." The mixed reaction of the child in question is apt to be horror and misunderstanding and, most of all, a desire that the act terminate immediately. Furthermore, in the myth, the coitus of the world parents is generally nonproductive in the sense that although there might be offspring, what the parents do they do in the cosmic darkness, leaving no room for light or for the creative activity of their children, who are literally smothered by the blind togetherness of the preoccupied and unresponsive parents. In both the Freudian and archetypal sense there is only one solution to this problem: separate the parents. How many parents have been disturbed by the child who climbs into the family bed, seemingly with the primary purpose of keeping the parents apart so they can pay attention to the child? In world parent myths and, metaphorically speaking, in the real world as well, being between becomes itself the problem, especially if the union of the parents is never-ending, as it is in the myth. The mythical offspring are between; being smothered and cramped in such a way as to make their lives useless. At some point, like their real life counterparts, they long to be free altogether of the restriction of their parents, who all too often resist the differentiation,

the development of individuality and the experimentation necessary for creativity. The world parent Mother in mythology is a nurturer, but she can also be a devourer. She is Earth, and Earth takes back in death what she gives. The Father can be a protector but he can also be a jealous destroyer and a dangerous adversary, as the myths of Gaia and Ouranos and Kronos and Rhea in the Greek tradition make clear. The desire to overcome the combination represented by the parents—to escape the darkness of life between them—is perfectly natural.

The method of separation is, of course, of psychological and general cultural interest. In many of the myths above, separation and the consequent freedom from parental interference is sufficient. In other myths more violent action—especially castration of the enemy father—appears to be necessary and supports an obvious Freudian interpretation. In the case of castration of the father, the myth seems to say, to become creative the offspring must delete the fertile powers of the dominating father, thus making him irrelevant as far as the mother—Earth—is concerned. Earth can now be the creative playground of the offspring of the world parents. Or, looking at the separation of or destruction of the world parents from another psychological perspective, it might be suggested that in order for the psyche—collective or individual—to develop, old ways must be revealed, confronted, and eliminated. In psychological as well as religious development we must die to the old way and be born to the new. Historically speaking, the death or separation of the world parents may also stand as a metaphor for a change in cultural perspective. In the Babylonian myth, for example, the feminine chaotic Tiamat can stand for what the Babylonians might have seen as the old Mesopotamian agricultural/matriarchal culture, while the hero Marduk stands for the new male/warrior dominated Babylonian one

Once the separation is achieved, the offspring proceed with their new creation. In the new space between the separated parents, light—usually in the person of a new sun god—appears. The sun is a new source of fertility at least partially replacing the old earth mother/sky father fertility, and the light is associated with cosmic and cultural order. To quote Charles Long, "The movement of the sun through the heavens each day is a sign of order and regularity. It symbolizes the victory of the sun over chaos and is simultaneously a symbol of immortality" (77).

It remains to be emphasized that at the base of any creative act—in art, in history, in psychological development—is the necessity of sacrifice. "It is not possible to create something without destroying something else at the same time," writes psychologist Marie Louise von Franz (154). To find the light we must separate or destroy the old authority, but it is the old authority itself or its broken pieces that will often serve as the material for new creation. We can free ourselves from the world of our conjoined parents, but their values are imbedded in us in some way. The old earth father will become the sky of our world, the mother the earth. The cosmos and our world will be made of them. Or, if we destroy the monster type of world parent we will use

the pieces of its body to make the new world. Thus Tiamat is divided by Marduk into a new sky and earth.

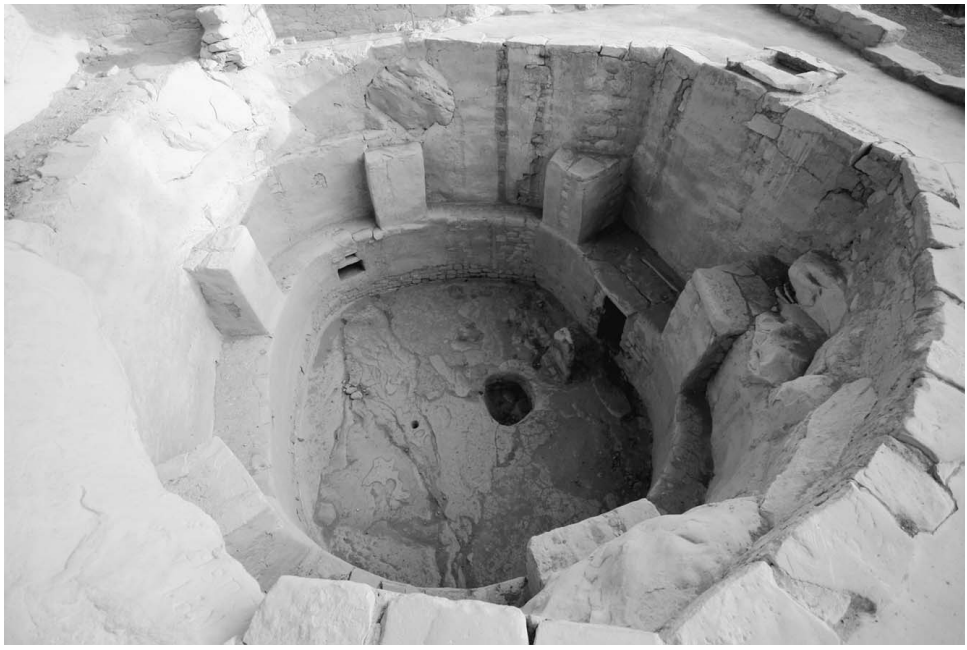
The necessary sacrifice involved in new creation can be illustrated visually in elements of modernist art such as cubism, in which, maintaining the goal of art as the representation of reality, the artist breaks up the old conventional view of subject matter and reassembles the bits and pieces to shed new light on inner structure of reality. Psychiatry attempts to do the same thing with the pieces of the re-examined psyche, the historian with bits and pieces of the past, the reproducing feminine body with her genes and those of others.

Emergence Creation

Central to most creation myths is the creation of human beings. In the creation myth types discussed above, the creation of humans is usually only one aspect of the overall creation of the universe. But in the type of myth known as emergence creation, the emphasis is squarely on the creation of humanity. In this myth type the focus is on a process by which humans emerge in stages into this world from under the earth. Emergence creation is, for the most part, peculiar to Native North Americans, particularly—but not exclusively—of the southwest region. A visitor to the ancient Anasazi ruins of Colorado, Arizona, and New Mexico will be struck by the little hole in the center of the floors of the sunken *kivas*—places of ancient social and religious activities. If one could enter the *kiva*s of present day pueblo tribes along the Rio Grande in New Mexico and in northwestern Arizona, the same hole would be evident. This hole is the *sipapu,* the symbolic opening from which the people emerged finally from the lower world—from Mother Earth. The emergence myth is about the gradual creation of particular people—literally, "the people"—of a particular place marked by the particular emergence site. Thus it is that the names of so many Native American tribes of the southwest literally mean "the people," and each tribal village is the de facto center of the world, where the people emerged.

The first stage of the ur myth that can be derived from the many emergence myths takes place in that lower world. Keresan-speaking people such as those of the Acoma, Laguna, and Zia pueblos of New Mexico tell of two sister-spirits living in the darkness of an underworld where they were taught and fed by a goddess figure called "Thinking Woman" or "Prophesying Woman." The Tewa tribes of the Rio Grande valley also originated in the darkness of the underworld and were taught there by a goddess known all over the southwest as "Spider Woman" or "Spider Grandmother." Further west and north, the Hopi Indian villages have several versions of the emergence, involving several "worlds" that existed "Under the World," where the precursors of the Hopi people were guided by the same Spider Woman. The nearby Zuni began in the underworld darkness nurtured by "Mother Earth."

Other peoples present variants of the prevailing southwest pattern. The Arikara say they emerged in the East but traveled to the West, which, in fact, they did, and that they were led and supported by "Mother Corn." The Apache



Ancient Native American ruins at Mesa Verde, Colorado. Kiva. (Dreamstime)

and Yuma people say they originated in the wet darkness of earth as do some Sioux groups. A striking example exists among those Kiowa who say that they began in a hollow log.

Whatever the nature of the original emergence starting place, the beings who exist there begin what is usually an arduous process involving several stages in their movement towards the world of light—our world. In the Acoma myth the two sister-spirits "grew slowly and knew one another only by touch." When they were ready, Thinking Woman, who had taught them language, gave them "baskets containing seeds for all the plants and models of all the animals that would be in the next world." The sisters, always with Thinking Woman's help, took tree seeds from the baskets and planted them, and a pine tree finally grew high enough to break a hole through to the top of the underworld, letting in a little light. Then the sisters gave life to some animal models in their baskets, and these animals helped prepare the hole for the emergence. Eventually the sisters climbed the pine tree with their baskets and broke through into this world. In an Apache myth the underworld beings had to call on the buffalo to use their horns to build a ladder up to a hole that allowed them entry into the world. The Arikara pre-people dug their way out. The Hopi, guided by Spider Woman, made their way through three worlds, developing morally and physically as they went, and entered this world—the Fourth, through a hollow reed and a *sipapu*. In a similar myth, the Navajo begin as lower forms

as beings and develop through several worlds, struggling against moral shortcomings before they finally emerge into this world. The Kiowa people are a small tribe because as they squeezed their way through a hollow log and a pregnant woman got stuck and blocked the way for the rest.

Invariably, the emerging people are greeted by light and warmth in the world into which they emerge. As in other types of creation myth, the sun in the emergence myth is often associated with a sky god creator, the husband, in a sense, of Mother Earth, whom he warms and fertilizes. The light, as always, represents the possibility of order and knowledge. But the presence of the light requires a major transformation among the people used to the protective darkness of the Mother. The brightness of the sun caused painful tears among the emerging Zuni until they were forced to recognize the father sun. The Tewa people came out into a "new world full of blinding light" and were terrified. But Spider Woman gently got them used to the new world.

The emergence myth is clearly derived from the phenomenon of birth. The people gestate in various forms within Mother Earth, are usually watched over by what is, in effect, a midwife-goddess, and they struggle in stages to emerge from a hole in Mother Earth as "the people" in a place that then becomes the de facto world center for those people. The fact that the father god has at best a minor role in the emergence creation emphasizes the mother-based birth process itself. The father god appears—as the sun—only when the creation process is complete, and even then, it is usually the guiding goddess, now acting as a culture hero, who directs the establishment of civilized life.

The emergence myth very likely has ancient precedents. It would have been logical for early cultures to find creation metaphors in the familiar mammalian birth process, or perhaps from the plant death and rebirth process rather than in the much more esoteric ex nihilo, creation from chaos, or world parent processes. In either the birthing act or the vegetation cycle, the feminine principle is necessarily dominant over the masculine, whose role in the pre-gestation period is somehow distant and perhaps unclear. Even now we naturally think of "Mother Earth" rather than "Father Earth." This is because it is earth, not sky, that appears to give birth to the elements of this world as opposed to the cosmic elements of the universe. For indications of this early use of the female—the Mother—as the primary metaphor for creation, we need only consider the ubiquitous existence of female figures and drawings in Paleolithic art—works that emphasize breasts, hips, and genitalia in apparent celebration of feminine sexuality and creative power.

The underworld where the emergence myth begins, then, stands for us as a womb; a dark, wet place that contains the potential for life to come. The unformed or partially formed beings that dwell there are, as Charles Long says, "seeds within the body of earth" (38). The underworld is the cosmic egg of the emergence myth, and the beings in the emergence womb long to become something more, as do

the beings in the cosmic egg of the chaos myth. In psychological terms, the beings in the emergence underworld are expressions of the longing for consciousness—for full realization. When they finally reach the light to which the Mother leads them, the created people are able to see and to make the connections on which society depends.

People of the emergence creation myth, like those whose creation myths are of different sorts, celebrate their creation and attempt to keep the creative process alive in sacred ceremonies. The sick Navajo sits in the center of a sand painting representing through symbols the act of creation, and the shaman sings the creation myth. In this way the sick person becomes a part of the creation process and will perhaps have a chance to begin again. For other peoples, certain dances are dances of creation that provide the same opportunity for renewal to the whole tribal body.

Earth-Diver Creation

The earth-diver creation myth type can be found in many parts of the world, but is particularly important in Central Asia, India, and Native North America. It is a myth type that stresses the creation of Earth as opposed to the larger cosmos. Animals often play an important role in the creation, as do the primeval waters and often an evil force that balances the good in a dualistic tension. Several strains within the earth-diver myth type are evident. These are the Indian, the Central Asian, the Algonquian North American, the Siouan North American, and a major variant, the Iroquoian North American, which contains the motif of the woman who falls from the sky. Elements of the earth-diver form exist among many California Native Americans and among peoples as far afield as the Finns and Hungarians, the Fiji Islanders, the Ainu of Japan, and the Yoruba of Africa.

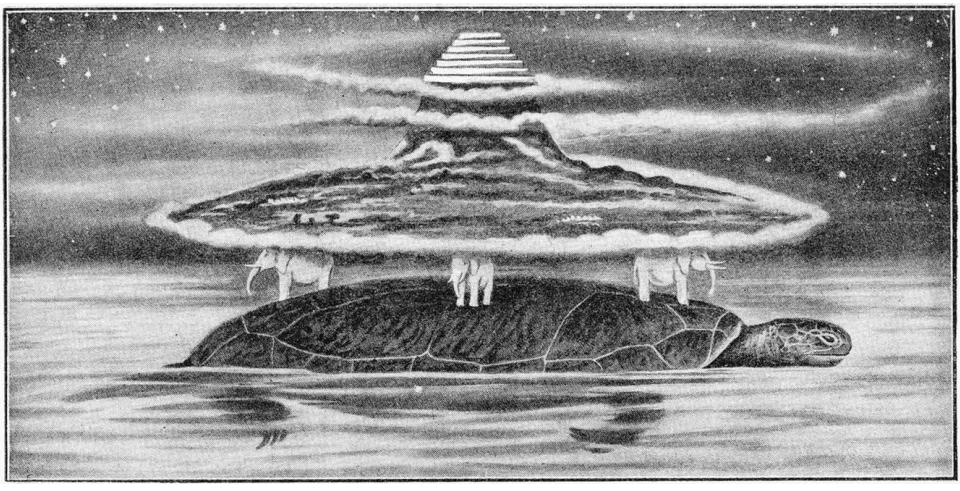
The fully developed earth-diver myth usually begins with the primeval waters and usually with a creator, or sometimes two creators, intent on creating Earth. Also present are various animals, who prove to be necessary assistants. Typically, these animals are sent on missions into the watery depths to bring up sufficient primal material—*prima materia*—to make the creation of Earth possible. In the Indian *Vishnu Purana,* Brahman, the essence of existence, in his form as the creator god Brahma, awoke and decided that there was earth below the primordial waters that were everywhere. Brahma took the form of a great boar and dove down "to find Mother Earth." He raised up the earth to where it floats now—a "mighty vessel"—on the original waters. Eventually this world, like all others before it and after it, will be destroyed and a new one created, reflecting the presence of Shiva the Destroyer, Brahma the Creator, and Vishnu the Preserver in the eternal and ultimate reality that is Brahman. The non-Hindu Birhor people of India say that the creator arose by way of a lotus stem from the waters, that he sat on the lotus and from there sent various animals to find the mud necessary for the creation of the world. All the animals failed until the lowly leech was able to swallow some mud and spit it into the creator's hand. This mud became the source of the new earth and its

humans. For the Garo of India it was a beetle who was finally able to gather clay from under the waters. Using this clay, the creator made Earth and decorated her with sky, clouds, and plant life. Eventually he made the first Garo as well.

The people of Central Asia and their possible relatives among the Romanians of Europe follow the earth-diver pattern but add the elements of the undermining devil or second creator. The Altaic people teach that in the beginning there was nothing but the primordial waters until one day two black geese appeared. One of the geese was the creator, and the other was the devil, who would become the first human. The devil/man insisted on trying to fly higher than the creator and the creator forced him into the waters and sent him to dive down to find rocks and earth with which to build the world. When God asked the devil/man to bring him more earth, he did so, but he hid some in his mouth, thinking he would create his own world when the creator was not looking. Both the earth that he handed the god and the earth in his mouth began immediately to grow. The Devil was forced to spit out the stolen material and it became wetlands.

In a related Siberian Buriat myth the creator god ordered the water bird to dive into the waters and bring back some earth to use to build the world. The new world was corrupted by Shiktur, the devil. While the creator went off to Heaven to get souls for his newly created humans, Shiktur tricked the dog who was guarding them and then spit on the new creation, stamping it with the evil that exits alongside good to this day.

Some people of Mongolia say that in the beginning, along with the waters, there was the sky god and his two sons, Ulgen Tenger and Erleg Khan. Ulgen was given the upper world and Erleg the lower world space that would become Earth. Ulgen sent the loon into the depths



In Native American myth our world is supported by four Elephants standing on the back of a giant Turtle who swims with it through the Sea of Infinity. (© Mary Evans Picture Library / Alamy)

to bring up mud with which to form land. After the loon failed, a duck succeeded in finding a bit of mud on which Ulgen fell asleep. Then Ulgen's brother tried to steal the mud from his brother, but this only made it grow. Once, while Ulgen was away, his brother tricked a guardian dog—exactly as in the Buriat myth—and spat on the new humans, thus condemning them forever to the diseases and pains to which animals and humans are subject.

A similar story to the Buriat one exists in Romania. According to that story, in the beginning, God sent Satan into the primeval depths to find soil with which to begin creating Earth. When Satan finally succeeded in his quest, God made a ball out of the soil and then fell asleep. Satan thought this would be a good time to steal the ball of earth, but every time he touched it, it grew until the waters were displaced. With the help of animals the problem was solved by the creation of rivers and other waterways.

The earth-diver myths of North America resemble those of their distant relatives in Central Asia, but there is less emphasis on the devil figure and more on the culture hero or heroine who helps in the creative process. The culture hero, however, can sometimes be a trickster whose story cycle contains mischievous and even amoral acts, linking him, at least in a distant sense, to the Devil figure. Furthermore, there can sometimes be a bad brother who struggles for dominance with a good brother in the early days of creation.

The earth-diver myths of the Algonquian-speaking tribes tend to be post-flood stories—that is, stories of a second creation—in effect a second chance following the corrupted worlds described in the Central Asian myths. The Anishinabe (Ojibwa) have a post-flood story in which the culture hero Nanabozho and a few animals survive to create a new world. Nanabhozo dove into the waters hoping to find mud for a new earth, but the waters were too deep for him. Several of the animals tried as well but failed until, finally, the lowly muskrat took his turn. After a long time he floated to the surface dead, but in his closed paw was a bit of earth. Out of this mud the culture hero made the world on the back of Turtle, who generously volunteered his services. Nanapush was the Lenape flood survivor and culture hero-creator. He, too, sent various animals into the depths of the water that covered the old world to find soil, and finally it was the muskrat who succeeded and Turtle who sacrificed his freedom to become the supporting surface for Earth, otherwise known as "Turtle Island." Flat Pipe was the Arapaho culture hero and Turtle was the successful diver. Turtle returned from her dive and she spit out a piece of land onto Flat Pipe. Earth as we know it and humans grew from this mud.

For the Bloods Indians, the culture hero Napioa directed the new creation, sending several animals to the depths before Turtle brought up the necessary mud. Napioa rolled up this mud into a ball, and it grew to become the earth.

Siouan-speaking tribes tell earth-diver myths in which the creative agent is a figure who is better known as a trickster than a creator. Among the Crow there is the story of Coyote, who sent the duck into the primeval sea to find the soil with

which to begin creating the world. Coyote breathed on the mud and it became Earth. He then made plants, animals and people. At some point, however, something of the Devil side of the trickster emerged in the appearance of a figure called Little Coyote, whose amoral acts lead to war, suffering, and death in the new world. The Assiniboine say that the trickster Iktome was the creator and that it was Muskrat who, like the diving hero of the Anishinabe myth, lost his life in the process of diving successfully for the creative mud. Iktome, like Coyote, possessed something of the old Devil within himself. When the frog argued with him, the trickster killed him, thus introducing death into the world, and Iktome taught the Assiniboine how to steal horses from others.

The most complex earth-diver myths in North America are those of the Iroquoian speakers and people directly influenced by them. Their complexity comes primarily with the addition of the Maiden from the Sky story that typically precedes the familiar Algonquian and Siouan type earth-diver story. In addition, the Iroquoian myths introduce the twins—one good, one evil—whose struggle against each other reflects the reality of the world.

The Mohawk myth tells of a place in the sky where human-like people lived in peace and tranquility until a series of events lead to the fall of a young woman named Earth to a darker world below where there existed only the primeval waters and some animals. The animals arranged for her to land on the back of Turtle. Earth then instructed the animals to dive into the waters for mud to be used in the creation of the world. After many tries by many animals, Muskrat succeeded and, out of the mud, the Woman from the Sky made the world and directed the process by which it was planted with corn, squash and other staple plants. The Cherokee tell a very similar tale, as do the Onondaga, the Seneca, the Tuscurora, the Wyandot, and the Huron. As in the Algonquian tales, Turtle is a central figure for all of these tribes, as is, almost always, Muskrat.

In most of the Iroquoian versions of the earth-diver tale we find the story of the twins produced by the Sky Woman or her daughter. Both continue the process of creation. The good twin creates things that will benefit humanity and the world, the bad twin does the opposite. The twins, for example, Good Mind and Bad Mind in the Tuscurora myth, here stand in the same relationship to each other as the creator and Devil-would-be-creator in the Central Asian and Siouan myths. The twins eventually fight, and although the good twin wins the fight, he cannot altogether eliminate his brother's evil deeds and thoughts from the world.

The ur earth-diver myth in its various incarnations can be interpreted in several ways. It reflects cultural struggles, a religious sense of basic duality in the world and the human experience—a struggle essentially between good and evil—and a psychological departure from a state of the unconscious or subconscious life to the level of full consciousness. Above all, the earth-diver myth shares with the emergence myth the metaphor of birth.

In the Iroquoian myths, for example, we begin in the paradisiacal, deathless

world of the sky. Typically a maiden in that world becomes pregnant and falls or is thrown through a hole in the heavenly ground to the formless and dark world below. As a cultural dream the myth seems to tell us that there is some sort of divine purpose behind our world and that it has to do with the creativity that is pregnancy and birth and, therefore, death—a purpose that is foreign to the paradise of the sky where the cycles of life and existence do not exist. The representative of the creative cycle of our earthly experience is contained in the woman who falls from the sky. She is the first priestess of Mother Earth—the world we live in that is dominated by the life cycles. The essential nature of Mother Earth is that she gives birth and devours her progeny in a never-ending process. The animals who see the woman falling live on or in the unformed chaotic waters—the maternal waters of potential creation—they know that they must provide a place for her landing. When she lands—typically on the Turtle's back—she initiates the creative diving process. It is here, in the diving itself, that the earth-diver myth truly begins.

In all earth-diver myths the animals are sent one by one to find the necessary creative material at the bottom of the waters. These divers are generally ordinary. They possess no supernatural powers; they are us. Whether we see the dive as a metaphor for a necessary descent into the unconscious world in search of consciousness, as a symbol of our purpose in the world to make creation conscious of itself, or as an essential religious truth—that it is Mother Earth who is the source of all life—the dive is as treacherous as that of so many heroes who journey into the underworld in search of something lost. In many myths, divers lose their lives in the service of the creative act. They are the expendable activating seeds of a new creation, and finally one of them succeeds in bringing up the sacred material of the mother; the clump of mud that stands in for the cosmic egg of the creation from chaos myth.

The birth metaphor continues as the mud is placed on the Turtle's back. Someone touches it, activates it, and it begins to grow, like a fetus, until it is Earth—Turtle Island—itself, the chaotic Mother power made conscious and orderly. Plants and more animals, including the human variant, are created, that is, are born of the Mother.

In the versions of the earth-diver myth that contain the twin motif, we have a meditation on the duality inherent in our experience of human life and existence itself. Things are born, they live, but then they die. The Mother gives but she also takes. One age gives way to another. Pain and conflict are an evident aspect of life. The two sides of the duality that pervade life are represented by the twins or by the conflict between the creator and his devil-trickster assistant. The twins are both offspring of Mother Earth or her representative on Turtle Island, and the devil creator is related in some close way to the good creator. These conflicts between two forces are the conflicts that rage within us all or, as Charles Long suggests, they can be expressions of the old cultural conflict between the hunter/gatherer and agricultural ways of life (189). In the Iroquoian myths, for example, the bad twin creates powerful

and dangerous animals—animals of the hunt. The good twin—favored by his mother—creates good domestic animals and edible plants. In some Iroquoian myths the woman who falls from the sky, the culture heroine who teaches the people how to live on the new earth, dies or is killed, and out of her body elements of the cosmos are made. She becomes, in that motif, an example of the world parent phenomenon and, most important, a literal expression of the feminine nature of the universe; she realizes her potential as Mother Earth.

Part II

The Creation Myths

The myths collected here represent cultures and religious traditions from all parts of the world. All cultures and religions have creation myths, and, as we are all one species, it is hardly surprising that there are many creation motifs and themes that appear to be almost universal. Most creation myths, for instance, establish a world center wherever the given culture resides. Almost always a creator deity is central. More often than not, evil enters what was originally a perfect world. To develop a deeper understanding of these often complex and even outrageous dream-like stories, the reader can consult the sources and suggestions for further reading included at the end of each entry. These source readings are listed by the last names of authors whose books are included and annotated in the bibliography at the end of the book. For further background information on basic themes and motifs important for understanding the myths, topics from Parts I, II, III, or IV are also listed. The primary type assigned to the given myth is indicated by bold print.

The myths are arranged alphabetically but are re-arranged by type and geographical region in Part V. Unless otherwise indicated, they have been re-told by the author.

ACHOMAWI

The Achomawi (sometimes called Ko'mmaidum or "People of the Snow") tribe of Northern California were a peaceful people who lived by hunting, fishing, and gathering wild plants for medicinal purposes. Like many other California tribes, they were the unfortunate victims of Gold Rush violence in the mid-19th century. The Achomawi tell a myth about two creators—one the wise Silver Fox, the other the amoral trickster, Coyote.

***

In the beginning there was only water and a clear sky, when suddenly a cloud

appeared and became Coyote. Mist that formed on the waters turned into Silver Fox. The two newly created beings thought of a boat and a boat was formed. Coyote and Fox floated about in the boat for many years but eventually became restless. To make a change, Silver Fox made Coyote lie down and Coyote immediately slept. While his companion was asleep, Silver Fox used combings from his hair to make a kind of mat that he spread out on the water. He then thought trees, rocks, shrubs, grass, and fruit. Then he woke up his friend, who asked where they were. "We're just here," said Silver Fox. Coyote, who had no self-control, was delighted and began to eat things at will. The two beings agreed to live in the new place and Silver Fox built the first sweat lodge there.

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The myth begins with the all-encompassing presence of the primordial waters, containing the potential for life. Although the waters in this creation from chaos myth are representative of unformed creation, or chaos, they are also the maternal source; the mother of creation. Born of the mother are two beings of different natures—an essential duality that people understand exists in life and, therefore, in creation itself. In this myth the effects of the duality play out in the idea that the Silver Fox aspect of life (and presumably, humanity) produces, and the amoral-trickster Coyote aspect eats. Silver Fox is wise and Coyote is lazy and impulsive. The story, therefore, suggests a moral lesson about constructive behavior.

Although this is a creation from chaos myth it has elements of the ex nihilo type of creation, especially in the segment in which Silver Fox thinks trees and other elements of creation into existence.

See Also: Animals in Creation, Cosmic Egg in Creation, Coyote in Creation, **Creation from Chaos**, Duality in Creation, **Ex Nihilo Creation**, Primordial Waters in Creation, Thought-based Creation, Trickster in Creation, Two Creators Motif.

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ACOMA (AA'KU)

The Acoma (Aa'ku) Native Americans, a Pueblo people of present day New Mexico, mark their sacred center in a village that sits on top of a 600 foot mesa. The Acoma people say that "Sky City," as it is widely called, is the oldest continually inhabited village in the area now known as the United States. The Acoma people, like their neighbors at Laguna, are a Keres (Keresan-speaking) people who have linguistic and cultural relatives further east in the southern pueblos along the Rio Grande. All of the Keres—the people of the pueblos at Laguna and Acoma in the east, and Santa Ana, Zia, San Felipe, Santo Domingo, and Cochiti, further west and north, are Christianized. Along with the new religion brought by the Spanish in the 16th century, however; the Pueblo people continue to maintain their original religious beliefs, myths, and ceremonies. There are several versions of the Keres

creation myth. The one below is specific to Acoma.

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In the beginning two sister-spirits were born somewhere in the darkness of the underground. Living in constant darkness they grew slowly and knew one another only by touch. For some time they were fed by a female spirit named Tsichtinako (Thinking Woman) who taught them language. When she thought the twins were ready, Tsichtinako gave the sisters baskets containing seeds for all the plants and models of all the animals that would be in the next world. Tsichtinako said the baskets were from their father and that they were to be carried to the light of the upper world. She helped the sisters find the seeds of four trees in the baskets, and these seeds the sisters planted in the dark. After a long time the trees sprouted and one—a pine—grew sufficiently to break a small hole through the earth above and let in some light. With Tsichtinako's help, the girls found the model of the badger, to whom they gave the gift of life and whom they instructed to dig around the hole so it would become bigger. They cautioned the animal not to enter into the world of light, and he obeyed. As a reward he was promised eventual happiness in the upper world. Next the sisters found the model of the locust in the baskets. After they gave him life, they asked him to smooth the opening above but warned him not to enter the world of light. When he returned after doing his job he admitted he had indeed passed through the hole. "What was it like up there?" the sisters asked. "Flat," he answered. Locust was told that for having done his work he could accompany the spirits to the upper world but that for his disobedience he would live in the ground and would have to die and be reborn each year. Then it was time for the sister-spirits to emerge. Instructed by Tsichtinako, they took the baskets, Badger, and Locust, climbed the pine tree to the hole above, and broke through into the upper world. There they stood waiting until the sun appeared in what Tsichtinako had told them was the east. They had also learned the other three directions from her, as well as a prayer to the sun, which they now recited, and the song of creation, which they sang for the first time.

Tsichtinako revealed that she had been sent to be the sisters' constant guide by the creator, Uchtsiti, who had made the world from a clot of his blood. The sisters were to complete the creation by giving life to the things in the baskets. This they did by planting the seeds and breathing life into the animals, but when the first night came the sisters were afraid and called on Tsichtinako, who explained that the dark time was for sleep and that the sun would return.

The creation was duly completed by the sisters, who took the names Iatiku (Life-Bringer) and Nautsiti (Full Basket).

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Over the years additions were made to the Acoma creation story. Some say the sisters quarreled and that Nautsiti disobeyed their father by giving birth to two sons fathered by hot rain drops from the rainbow and that, as punishment, the sisters were deserted by Tsichtinako.

According to this story, one of the boys was brought up by Iatiku. When he was old enough, he became his aunt's husband. It was from this incestuous relationship that the first people were born.

Another tradition developed concerning spirit figures known as kachina, figures common to most of the pueblo peoples of New Mexico and Arizona. Some say that Iatiku later created these spirits, who would spend part of the year in the sacred mountains and part of the year with the people dancing for them in a way that would bring rain.

Acoma is a matrilineal culture; ownership is passed down through the female line. Not surprisingly, the Acoma creation story is dominated by goddesses rather than by a male deity. At the center of this creation myth is the concept of female power in the universe. In such a universe the logical venue for the beginning of the process whereby the world as we know it is created is the inside of the Earth, the symbolic womb of the Great Mother personified by the spirit Tsichtinako. While we are told that the Earth itself and the potential for various animal and plant forms were created by a drop of the father god's blood, we hear little or nothing about him after that. It is the female characters who are necessary to the process by which the people and their society emerge from the darkness and become viable humans. The father god provides the seed; the mother goddess gives birth and nurtures and establishes the customs of the people.

The Acoma people were once sedentary and agricultural. Their creation myth, whatever else it may be, is a depiction of the process by which seeds germinate and sprout forth from within the earth into our world. And among the sprouts are good plants and bad, represented by the twin sons, one of whom institutes incest or essential sinfulness at the very roots of the human experience.

Tsichtinako (Sus'sistinako) or "Thinking Woman" (although at the Zia pueblo she is male) is a particularly important southwestern figure. Sometimes translated as Thought Woman or Prophesying Woman, she in some ways resembles the Hopi sometimes generatrix, Hurúing Wuhti (Hard-Beings Woman). She also has characteristics of Spider Woman, known to all southwestern tribes. Thinking Woman, who is of the fertile womb-like underworld (like Spider Woman), is able to carry her creative thought into the outside world. She has been called "a kind of silent Logos who brings everything into existence."

See Also: Ancestors in Creation, Birth as Creation Metaphor, Bodily Waste or Fluids as Creation Source, Culture Heroes in Creation, **Emergence Creation**, Goddess as Creator, Incest in Creation, Laguna (Kawaik), Origin of Evil in Creation, Spider Woman, Sun in Creation, Thinking Woman, Thought-based Creation, Twins in Creation.

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AINU

The Ainu (or Ezo) are indigenous people of the far northern islands of Japan who speak a non-Japanese language. As is the case with many cultures their name means "human" or the "people."

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In the beginning there was a mixture of mud and water in what would become the world; no living things existed. The gods and demons and animals lived in a series of heavens above and worlds below our world. In the highest heaven there was the creator god Kamui. His compound was protected by an immense wall with an iron gate. Kamui decided to build the world on the back of a huge fish that took in the waters and blew them out to create the ocean tides. The creator sent a small bird, a wagtail, to make Earth habitable. Confused, the bird flew down and fluttered about and beat its wings at the mushy surface until a few dry spots emerged, forming the islands where the Ainu live now.

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According to one story, the devil tried to undercut the creator's work by swallowing the sun, only to be prevented from doing so when the creator sent a crow to stand in for the sun. The world became so beautiful that the animals begged Kamui to let them live in it. He agreed, and he also created the Ainu out of out of earth and sticks.

A tradition developed among some Ainu that their extreme hairiness indicates that they descended from a bear god. Bears are an important totem animal for the Ainu. Still another—probably later—Japanese influenced myth, tells of a heavenly couple, reminiscent of the Japanese Izanami and Izanagi, sent by the Creator. Okikurumi and Turesh lived on a mountaintop. The couple had a son whom some say was the first Ainu. Some say his name was Aionia. Aionia was a "culture hero" in that he taught the people what they needed to know to survive and live properly. It is said that when he returned to heaven the gods were repulsed by his human smell, so he returned to Earth and left his contaminated clothes there. The clothes became various animals.

Although Ainu mythology has characteristics in common with that of the Japanese, with whom they have interacted since the early ninth century, their creation myth is their own; it tells how the world and the people—the Ainu—came into being. Since the creator sends an animal down to the world to assist in the creation, the Ainu myth can be called a derivative of the earth-diver creation type so common in Central Asian and Native American cultures. Another Central Asian connection is the presence of the Devil as a humorous underminer of the creator's work. In other cultures the

devil assistant is the trickster figure. As always in earth-diver creations the primal waters and mud symbolize the possibility of birth—of new life or renewal. They are the birth element. It is notable that the creator god in one version of the Ainu creation myth agrees to live with the people as a culture hero, conveying in myth symbolism the concept of the ever-present spirit of god. But the myth that tells of the presence of the undermining Devil in the creative process speaks, like the Hebrew Genesis, of the presence of evil in the world from the beginning.

See Also: Animals in Creation, Clay-based creation, **Creation from Chaos**, Culture Heroes in Creation, Devil in Creation, **Earth-Diver Creation**, Japanese (Shinto), Primordial Waters in Creation, Trickster in Creation.

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ALGONQUIN

The name Algonquin should not be confused with the name given to the larger Algonquian language family of which the Algonquin's language, along with those of many Native Americans, including, for example, the Anishinabe (Ojibwe), the Blackfoot, and the Penobscot, is a part. The Algonquins are members of an Indian group in Canada known as the Anicinape or Omaniwininiwak.

In one Algonquin creation myth it is the Great Earth Mother who brings the world into existence. She produced two sons and named them Glooskap (or Michabo, a form of Nanabhozo among other Algonquians) and Malsum. The first was a culture hero who embodied goodness and creativity. Malsum (the Wolf) was evil and destructive, a devil persona.

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Earth Mother died and Glooskap created all the elements of nature, including animals and humans from her body. Malsum used the mother sources to create evil and dangerous plants and animals. A struggle between the two brothers was inevitable, and each had a secret vulnerability. Malsum could only be killed by the roots of a fern plant; Glooskap could be killed with an owl feather. When Malsum succeeded in killing his brother with an owl feather arrow, he reveled in the success of evil. But Glooskap somehow revived, as goodness always does, and the good brother killed the evil one with a fern. Malsum, too, revived but was confined to the underground as an evil spirit. Glooskap ascended to the heavens in his white canoe.

Bad things began one year when the people's stream dried up. The people sent a representative north to the stream's source to see what the problem was. In time, the man came to a wide part of the stream that was yellow and polluted. He nevertheless asked the people there for a drink, but they told him he would have to ask their chief upstream who kept all of the good water for himself. The man walked on to where the chief lived. This chief was a giant who had dug a huge hole to dam up the water at its source. The man told him why he had come, and the monster opened his mouth to roar threats at him, revealing in his mouth the people and objects he had devoured.

The man ran back to his people and told them what he had seen. Now Glooskap, up above in his white canoe, had seen all of this and determined to regain water for his people. He dressed himself as for war, shook the Earth with his war cry and the stomping of his feet in a war dance, took up a mountain made of flint and turned it into a huge knife, and moved towards the monster chief. After a terrible fight, in which the monster tried to swallow Glooskap, Glooskap sliced open the giant's belly, thus releasing a torrent of water that turned the little dried up stream of the first people into a mighty river. He squeezed the monster, turning him into a bull frog, and threw him into a swamp.

***

This Algonquin myth contains many familiar creation myth themes. This is a culture that recognizes its sources in the Earth rather than the Sky. It is Earth Mother's body out of whom the animals, plants, and people come. Her dismembered body is the world, and the world is, therefore, highly animistic, that is, full of the Earth Mother's spirit. The world is a product of the birth-life-death-rebirth cycle of Mother Earth rather than of a distant sky god's whim. It is likely that the myth expresses the dominance of an agricultural way of life, perhaps as opposed to a hunting culture. But inherent in the creation itself is a struggle between the two sons; the force that creates and that which destroys. Both main characters—in effect twins in the overall creation myth symbolic vocabulary—appear to be immortal, in spite of their having killed each other. The message would seem to be that both goodness and evil are in the world forever. The cultural dream tells us that life is a struggle between the two elements of an essential duality; good and evil, death and life. As for Glooskap, he is a central figure in the myths of other Algonquian tribes in various parts of the continent, a true culture hero who teaches and preserves.

See Also: Animistic Creation, Anishinabe (Ojibwe, Chippewa), Culture Heroes in Creation, Devil in Creation, Dismemberment of Primeval Being as Creation, Duality in Creation, Mother Earth, Trickster in Creation, Twins in Creation, **World Parent Creation**.

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ALTAIC

The term Altaic refers to the varied cultures of the three generally but not universally recognized branches of the Altaic language family—Turkic, Mongolian, and Tungusic. The people who speak Altaic languages live in lands that extend from Asia Minor into central, east and north Asia. They are Turks, Mongolians, Manchurians, and peoples of the Caucasus. The following Central Asian myth comes from the Caucasus.

***

In the beginning there was nothing in the world but the primordial waters. One day two black geese flew back and forth over the waters. One of the geese was actually the creator. The other would become the first human, but he was also

the devil, and he could not resist trying to fly higher than the god. Furious, the god made the man-devil fall into the waters. When the man-devil begged for help, God made him dive down under the waters for a rock and then earth, which God turned into the world. When God asked the man-devil to bring him more earth, the man-devil did so, but he hid some in his mouth, thinking he would create his own world when the creator was not looking. Both the earth that he handed the god and the earth in his mouth began immediately to grow. Pained by the enormous swelling of his mouth, the man-devil begged once again for the lord's help, and the god chastised him before allowing him to spit out the material in his mouth. This earth was soggy material that became the Earth's wetlands.

Another Altaic creation story, this one from Siberia, identifies the creator god as Ulgen and the first man as Erlik, who soon turns to evil ways and becomes, in effect, the devil in the myths of the region. Like the serpent in the Hebrew creation myth, he corrupts the first woman.

***

When Ulgen saw mud floating on the primordial waters, he saw a human face reflected in the waters and gave it life. In this way the first man, Erlik, was born. Soon Erlik boasted that he could create a man as well as Ulgen could. Ulgen reacted by flinging his first creation into the ends of the earth, where he still reigns as the Devil. Erlik returns to the upper world frequently and always brings evil with him.

After the fall of Erlik, God created the Earth and placed eight trees and eight men on it. The eighth man, Maidere, and the eighth tree stood on a mountain of gold, and at Ulgen's bidding Maidere created the first woman. When he saw that he could not give the woman life, Maidere left her in the care of a furless dog and went to get help from Ulgen. While he was away, Erlik came and offered the dog a fur coat in exchange for a look at the woman. He not only looked, but he also played seven flute notes into her ear, and she came to life possessed of seven tempers and many bad moods. When Maidere returned he was surprised to find the woman alive. When he learned of Erlik's deception and the dog's betrayal, he condemned the animal to a life of bad treatment.

***

The myths of the Altaic peoples tend to be influenced by their shamanistic past and their contact with major world religions such as Islam, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, and Christianity. As in these religions, duality is central to the universe. The Altaic creation myths give the devil a significant role in cosmogony by equating him, as in the first of these myths, with the first human and thus establishing the concept of sin or counter-creation as a human element. The Devil participates in creation like many trickster-devils in Central Asia and native America, but he instills a germ of evil into the work of the primary creator, much as in the Hebrew story in Genesis. The fact that the presumably all-powerful creator allows that participation suggests something about the inevitability of evil. The first of the myths above is a typical earth-diver story while

the second is an etiological myth to the extent that it explains, for example, a certain attitude towards dogs among the Altaic peoples.

See Also: Animals in Creation, Buriat, Clay-based Creation, Central Asian, Devil in Creation, Duality in Creation, **Earth-Diver Creation**, Etiological Creation Myths, Fall from Grace in Creation, Primordial Waters in Creation, Romanian (Rumanian), Samoyed, Siberian-Tartar, Trickster in Creation.

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ANATOLIAN

Beginning early in the second millennium B.C.E., an Indo European people, the Hittites, ruled over a large portion of Anatolia (Asian Turkey) that had previously been occupied by the non-Indo European Hattians, a name (Hatti) used by the Hittites to identify themselves. In fact, the original Hattian culture is sometimes referred to as the proto-Hattian to distinguish it from the later Hattian-Hittite culture. The Hittites quickly adapted their language to the cuneiform script learned, presumably, from the Mesopotamians, and Hittite remained the dominant language of Anatolia during the second millennium. From the Hattians and other neighbors, the Hurrians, the Hittites borrowed and assimilated so much language and religion that it is more appropriate to speak of a combined Anatolian mythology rather than a distinct Hittite, Hattic, or Hurrian mythology. The Hurrians, or Hurri, who were neither Indo European nor Semitic peoples, had moved into Mesopotamia and what is now Syria at about the time of the Hittite arrival in Anatolia. By the middle of the millennium they had established major centers at Nuzi in the eastern Tigris region and Alalakh in northern Syria, and by late in the millennium there was an important Hurrian presence and influence in Canaanite Ugarit.

The mythology of pre-Greek and pre-Islamic Anatolia, then, is an amalgamation of the pantheons and sacred stories of the Hattians, the Hittites, and the Hurrians. Other Mesopotamian mythic material in addition to Canaanite stories also found their way into Anatolian mythology by way of the Hurrians.

Even so, we have no real knowledge of a creation story in this amalgamation. What can be assumed is that the old Hattian mother goddess, with roots at least as deep as the concept of the great goddess depicted in nearby Neolithic Çatal Hüyük, was the source of life and a natural mate for the Anatolian weather-storm god, himself a close mythical relative of Zeus, Indra, Thor, and other familiar Indo European sky gods, perhaps especially those of eastern Europe. An important function of the storm god was to constantly fight to retain his power at the top of the pantheon. In this aspect, also, he resembles other Indo European high gods and storm gods. It is probable that the meeting of the power of the storm god and the fertility of the Earth Mother accounted for creation in this mythology.

The mother goddess and the storm god had two daughters: Mezulla, a kind of culture hero who served as an intermediary between the human and divine worlds, and Inara, who was enlisted by her father to help in his struggle against the chaotic forces who would overthrow him.

See Also: Goddess as Creator, Sexual Impulse in Creation, Sky Father and Earth Mother in Creation, **World Parent Creation**.

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ANISHINABE (OJIBWE, CHIPPEWA)

An Algonquian speaking people, the Anishinabe, sometimes called Ojibwe or Chippewa, live in the Great Lakes area of what is now the United States and Canada. Anishinabe means "the people." Their mythology often features the culture-hero/trickster/spirit figure, Nanabozho, (Manbhozo, Michabo, Mishaabooz, the Great Hare). Their creation myth tells how a broken world was re-created by the Kitchi-Manitou—the Great Spirit—with the help of Nanabozho.

***

The original world and its original people, the Anishinabe, were created, like all things, by the greatest of spirits (manitou), the Kitchi-Manitou (Gitchi Manito, the Great Spirit). The world was beautiful, but gradually the people became evil and destructive, upsetting the balance among themselves and their environment. The Great Spirit put an end to the mess by sending a great flood to destroy everything and everyone—everyone except Nanabozho, sent to the world by the Kitchi-Manitou, and a few flying and swimming creatures. Nanabhozo and some of the animals survived by floating on a log.

After a time, Nanabhozo announced that he would dive to the bottom of the waters to retrieve enough earth to begin a new world. The dive lasted for a very long time, but eventually Nanabhozo surfaced without any earth. The waters are too deep, he said. Several of the animals more experienced in diving tried to accomplish Nanabhozo's goal for him. The Loon tried and failed, as did the helldiver, the mink, and the turtle. All returned, more dead than alive, without retrieving any earth. Just as everyone was about to give up, the muskrat asked to be allowed to dive. The other animals jeered at his suggestion but Nonabhozo insisted that the little animal be given his chance.

So it was that little Muskrat dove into the depths. When after many hours he floated back to the surface, Nanabhozo pulled him onto the log and sadly announced that he was dead. But in the dead animal's closed paw was a bit of earth. The muskrat had reached the bottom of the waters after all. Now the turtle volunteered his back and his life as a surface for the ball of earth, and the animals called on Kitchi-Manitou for help. Help came in the form of winds from the Four Directions, winds that caused the little ball of earth to grow gradually into an island on the now dead turtle's back.

Nanabhozo and the animals danced and chanted to help the process along, and finally the world we know was formed, thanks to the Kitchi-Manitou and especially to the sacrificial act of the turtle and muskrat.

***

The story of the flood and the recreation of the world is found in many cultures and scriptures, including early Sumerian/Babylonian texts and, of course, the Hebrew Bible. The mythical ancestors of the flood hero Nanabhozo in these earlier stories are Ziasudra/Utnapishtim and Noah. But the Anishinabe story, like so many Native American creation myths, is primarily an earth-diver myth, in which an animal dives into the primal maternal waters to retrieve enough earth to begin the constitution of a new world. In many of these myths it is the turtle that supports the weight of the new world as a willing sacrificial victim. The central figure in the Anishinabe myth is Nanabhozo, who, as a culture hero, initiates the process of re-creation, acting, like other culture heroes, as the representative on Earth of the ultimate creator Great Spirit. In the earth-diver myths humans and animals are typically left to achieve the elements of creation themselves rather than through divine intervention. The message of this cultural dream is that the creative act, whenever and wherever it takes place in human life, requires the participation of humans. The Great Spirit can conceive of creation but it is the beings of creation—the little Muskrat, symbolically, like the seemingly insignificant little human—who makes it real.

See Also: Animals in Creation, Babylonian, Culture Heroes in Creation, **Earth-Diver Creation**, Fall from Grace in Creation, Flood in Creation Myths, Four Directions in Creation, Hebrew, Primordial Waters in Creation, Sacrifice in Creation, Sumerian.

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APACHE

The Tinde (the People) of the North American southwest were named Apache (the enemy) by the Pueblo people they raided. The Apaches are related to other Athabascan speaking peoples, including the Navajos and several groups in Alaska and Canada. They came to the Southwest relatively late compared to the Pueblo people—perhaps as late as 1000 C.E.

The Apaches are now divided into five basic groupings, the White Mountain or Western Apaches in eastern Arizona, the Chiricahua in southwestern New Mexico (famous for the great warrior Geronimo), the Jicarilla in northeastern New Mexico, the Mescalero in southeastern New Mexico, and the Lipan in southeastern Texas. Not surprisingly, given the fragmentation of the tribe and its tendency to break up into still smaller subgroups, there are many Apache creation myths.

The Apaches, like many other Native Americans, believe that sacred stories must be told only at night and only during the cold months. In the daytime or during warmer months, dangerous beings—snakes, scorpions, lightning—might be

able to hear themselves talked about and might punish both the storytellers and the listeners.

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In the beginning the Earth was only water and the people, animals and plants lived in the dark underworld. The darkness was pleasant to those animals we think of as night animals—the owl or the mountain lion, for instance—but not to the liking of the people and other day animals. Arguments ensued, and to settle them everyone agreed on a game to determine whether there would be light or darkness. The game, still played today by Apache children, involved finding a button by looking through the thin wood of a thimble-like object. The day animals were better at this game than the night animals and were rewarded with the rising of stars and then of the sun. When the sun got to the top of the underworld, he found a hole and saw the Earth on the other side. When he told the people of the world above, they all wanted to go there, so they built four mounds—one for each direction—and planted them with various fruits and flowers. Both the mounds and the plantings grew until two girls climbed them to pick flowers; all growth then stopped, leaving the mountaintops still far from the hole above. It took the help of the buffalo to get the people up to the hole. The buffalo gave their long straight horns to be used as a ladder, and it is because of the weight of the climbers that the buffalo's horns to this day are curved. Before emerging from the hole the people sent up the moon and sun, to provide light, and four winds—one from each underground mound—to blow away the waters that covered everything. After various animals had gone through the hole to test the new world, the people emerged and traveled in each of the four directions until they reached the seas. On these journeys the individual tribes broke off to make their homelands. Only the Jicarilla Apaches stayed behind, constantly circling the hole from which they had come, and eventually the Great Spirit settled them there in what is the center of the world.

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Another Jicarilla myth gives a prominent role to kachina-like personifications of the basic natural powers.

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The Hactcin existed before creation, when there was only dark, wet chaos—the world womb, as it were. Being lonely, the Hactcin created the essential elements of the universe and also created Earth Mother and Sky Father. As for the people, at this time they lived only as potential form in the damp dark underworld, where a figure called Black Hactcin ruled. Black Hactcin was the true creator. He joyfully made animals out of clay and then taught them what and how to eat and how to reproduce themselves. Then he told them to find appropriate places to live, and they did—the buffalo went to the plains, certain sheep and goats to the mountains, prairie dogs under the ground, birds to the air and trees, crickets to the grass, frogs and fish to the water, and so forth. Black Hactcin also called down water from the sky and invented seeds. The animals asked him to give them a special

companion, one who could take his place in case he ever decided to hide from the world. Black Hactcin agreed and began work on the creation of humankind. The animals helped him by gathering the essential materials—pollen, clay, valuable stones, minerals—but Black Hactcin made them stay away while he worked. After facing the four directions, he made a sketch of his own shape on the ground. Then he used the color gifts of the animals to flesh out the various parts of his creation. For instance, red ochre was used for blood, coral for skin, rock for bones, opal for fingernails and teeth, and abalone for the white part of the eyes. Black Hactcin used a dark cloud for the hair, and of course the cloud would later become white. To bring the first man to life, Black Hactcin blew wind into him. Then he raised him up and commanded him to speak. He then commanded him to laugh, shout, and walk. Black Hactcin also made the man run in a certain pattern, which is why, at a girl's puberty ceremony today, the girl must run in the same pattern. First Man lived alone with the animals, and they all spoke the same language. The animals told Black Hactcin that the man needed a personal companion, however, and the creator made him dream of a woman, who was there with him when he woke up. First Man and First Woman were happy.

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Of note in this myth is the role of Black Hactcin as an Earth-bound creator rather than a sky god creator. In this role, as a teacher of the basic means of survival, he becomes as much a culture hero as a creator.

A variation of the Jicarilla creation story says that it was the dog that asked the creator for a companion and that it was he who drew the sketch of man with his paw. When the man blossomed into life, he and the dog went off together, best friends.

In still another Jicarilla myth, one of the emergence type, the underworld in which the people begin their existence is a great swelling womb. They enter the world by an opening at the top of a mountain after the waters of the Earth have "broken." Appropriately, the creation myth is of great importance in the puberty ceremonies of Apache girls.

Like several other emergence myths, the Lipan emergence creation clearly suggests an analogy with birth. Everything begins in the womb of Earth herself.

***

When the people lived in the lower world in darkness, they wondered if there was a different kind of world anywhere else. It was decided in council that someone should be sent out to explore, and Wind agreed to go. He went up to our world and blew away some of the waters that covered everything, and there was land. He did not go back to the people below as he had promised, though. The people then sent Crow out and he did not come back either; instead, he stayed and picked the eyes out of the dead fish he found on the new land. Next the people sent out Beaver, but he amused himself by building dams in the streams he found trickling through the new land, and he, too, failed to come back. It was only when they sent faithful Badger that the people found out about our world.

Badger went up, looked around, and came back to report on everything he had seen. Finally, the people sent up the Four Grandfathers; they were the first Native Americans, and they arranged the world for us. They did this by turning one of themselves into a huge ball. Out of this ball they fashioned the trees, mountains, and streams. When everything was as it should be, the people below were called, and they came out into this world.

After the emergence, the people wandered about, and some stopped at various places, forming the tribes. They were led by Killer of Enemies (Sun) and Changing Woman (Moon). The last people to settle were the Lipan Tinde. Sun and Moon vowed to separate from the people and from each other and to keep on moving. They would meet each other once in a while in eclipses.

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Many of the characters in this Apache myth—Killer of Enemies and Changing Woman, for example—are found also in the mythology of another Athabascan tribe, the Navajos.

All of the emergence creation stories of the Apaches have clear connections to the idea of gestation and birth. The presence of the maternal waters, the primal mounds, the importance of women, all point to the earth mother, earth womb concept. The emergence myths are ubiquitous in the southwest and are in keeping with the predominance of women-centered, matrilineal societies. It is also possible that the Apaches—and Navajos—were influenced in their mythological thinking by the emergence myths of the Pueblo peoples who had long lived in the southwest when they arrived.

The Mescalero Apaches place special emphasis on the connection between a girl's puberty rites and the creation. When a girl menstruates for the first time, a sacred lodge is built for her; the form of the lodge is based on the created universe—a circle bisected along the four directions—and mirrors the craftsmanship (deus faber—god as craftsman) involved in creation itself. Of the 12 poles holding up the lodge, the four main ones are the Four Grandfathers who hold up the universe. They are the four directions, the four seasons. The puberty ceremony itself lasts four days and four nights and is, of course, a recreation of the first human in the newly blossomed woman. In a White Mountain Apache myth of the Four Grandfathers and the sacred lodge, the universe itself is the lodge.

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An old medicine man told anthropologist Grenville Goodwin (*See* Goodwin, 1–3) that when the Four Grandfathers started to set up the world, the wind came and blew it over. This happened several times. The Earth was simply too weak to stand up. The grandfathers conferred and decided to set the Earth up by pulling it from four different directions, making each direction like a solid foot. This time the Earth did not blow over but it was necessary to secure the feet. So, on the east side foot they placed a big black cane, covered with black metal thorns. On the south foot they placed a big blue cane covered with blue metal thorns. On the west foot they placed a big yellow cane covered with yellow metal thorns.

And on the north foot they placed a big white cane covered with white metal thorns. Now the Earth was pretty secure, but it was mushy—too full of water, and it swayed in the wind. Now the winds tested the Earth. Old Man Black Wind, the East Wind threw himself against the Earth, and it remained steady. Then Old Man Black Water threw himself against the Earth, and there was thunder in all four directions, but the Earth remained secure. But Earth also began to shiver, so the four creators decided that Earth was cold and needed hair. So it was that they gave Earth grasses and trees and other plants—its hair. But Earth still seemed a bit weak, so they decided it needed bones. So they made rocky mountains and rocks sticking out of the Earth. These are the Earth's bones. Then they wondered "How will it breathe, this Earth?" The answer came with the arrival of Black Thunder, who gave the Earth veins. He whipped the Earth with lightning and made water start to come out. For this reason all the water runs to the west.

Then the four grandfathers established the sun and its east to west path, but they made the sun too close to the Earth and it got too hot. This made life painful for the people they placed on the new Earth. So, they moved it higher. They had to do this a second time as it was still too hot, but finally things seemed about right—hot, but not too hot, light, but not too light. This last place they set the sun is just where it is now. Next the creators made the moon and arranged for it to go each night from east to west. But the moon was too close to the Earth, and it was like daytime at night. Once again they conferred, and they moved the moon several times until finally it was just right, and that is the way the moon is today. This is the way they made the Earth for the people. This is the way all these wild fruits and foods were raised for the people, and this is why the people have to use them—because they grow here.

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A creation myth told by the Chiricahua Apaches is influenced by contact with the white invaders of their land. Strictly speaking, it is a re-creative flood myth rather than a creation myth.

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The first people on Earth did not know anything about the Great Spirit. They only knew the Hactcin, the spirits of the Earth, who lived in the mountains. The Great Spirit was not pleased, so he sent the Flood and most of the world perished. Some of the people and animals saved themselves by climbing White-ringed Mountain (near what is now Deming, New Mexico). The turkey was the last one up, and he got his tail feathers wet, which is why they are tipped with white today. When the waters withdrew, the saved people and animals went down the mountain and something strange happened. Two men were made to stand before a gun and a bow and arrow and were told to choose between them. The one who chose first took the gun and became the White Man; the one who got the bow and arrow became the Indian.

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As a collective culture, the Apache tribes rank among the greatest of creation story tellers, combining many of the most prevalent of the world's creation themes.

See Also: Animals in Creation, Animistic Creation, Birth as Creation Metaphor, Clay-based Creation, **Creation from Chaos**, Culture Heroes in Creation, Deus Faber Creation, **Emergence Creation**, Etiological Creation Myths, Fall from Grace in Creation, Flood in Creation Myths, Four Directions in Creation, Primordial Waters in Creation, Sun in Creation.

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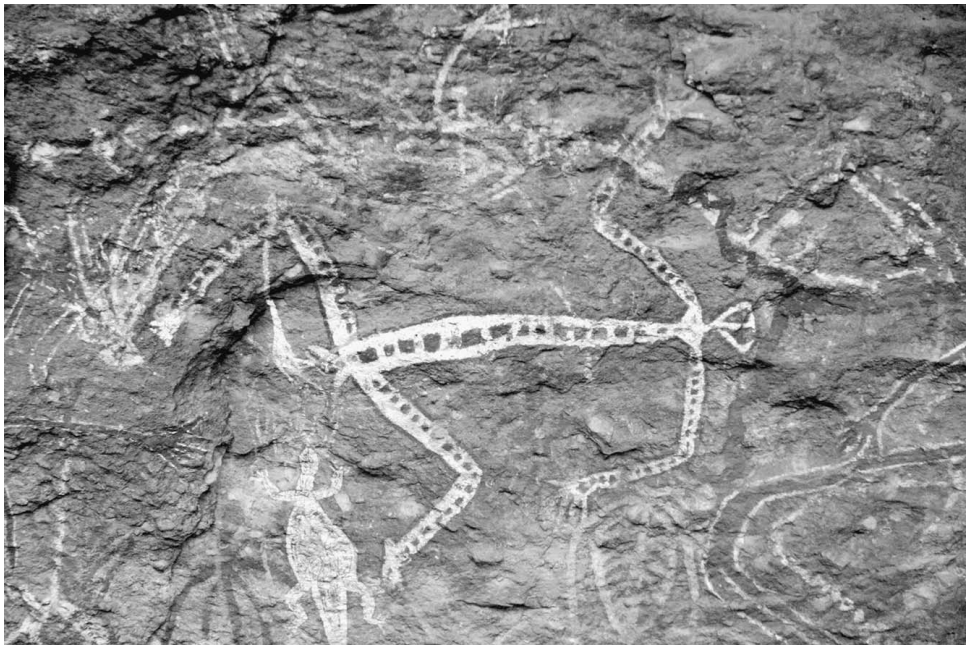
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ARANDAN (ARUNTAN)

The much decimated Australian indigenous group called Arandans or Aruntans lived along the Upper Fiske River in Central Australia. Major figures in their creation myth are the giant rat-like creature, the bandicoot, and the creator-ancestor Karora. There are references in the myth to a *tnatantja* pole, a magic weapon or *tjurunga* of the ancestors. A given ancestor, who dreams sacred places such as the Ilbalintja Soak (lake or pond) into existence, protects his *tjurunga* against potential thieves. To lose his *tjurunga* is to lose a living part of himself, perhaps the source of his creative powers. Also mentioned in the myth is a bull-roarer, a decorated wooden object that, when swung around, makes a humming sound known by the Aborigines as God's Voice. The bull-roarer is an object found in many societies; it is a flat piece of wood with pointed ends. At one end is a hole through which a hair string is attached so the bull-roarer may be spun around to make a mysterious buzzing sound. In Australian societies—and many other cultures—it is used in sacred ceremonies to ward off evil spirits, to cure the sick, to lure animals into traps, or, as in this case, to create new beings.

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In the beginning the creator, Karora, lay sleeping in the place now called Ilbalintja, in what would later become a soak. He was covered by rich soil and a myriad of flowers and other plants. Yet there was only darkness everywhere. Suddenly from the center of the ground above Karora a beautifully decorated and living *tnatantja* pole rose and grew all the way to the sky. The god's head lay under the ground on the roots of the pole, and in that head were thoughts that somehow became real. As he thought or dreamed, huge bandicoots slithered out of his navel and armpits and broke through the soil above, and the sun began to rise over Ilbalintja. The sun having brought light, Karora burst through the earth, his emergence leaving a gaping hole—the Ibalintja soak—which filled with the bloodlike juice of the honeysuckle. Having left the earth, Karora's body lost its magical powers, and the god became hungry. He grasped two of the bandicoots writhing around him and roasted them in the heat of the new sun.



Aboriginal rock art depicts a Mimi spirit, Kakadu National Park in northern Australia. According to folklore, Mimi spirits taught indigenous Australians hunting, the use of fire, and other survival skills. (Shutterstock)

As the sun went down decked in necklaces and a veil of hair strings, the great ancestor thought about a helper but fell asleep with his arms stretched out. As he slept, a bull-roarer emerged from his armpit and turned into a young man. In the morning Karora woke up to find his new companion lying next to him but without life. The ancestor, his body now decorated, made the sacred Raiankintja call. The sound gave life to his child, and father and son did the ceremonial dance.

During the next nights Karora gave birth to many more sons, all of whom became hungry and ate bandicoots until not one was left. Karora sent his sons into the plains to find more bandicoots, but they returned hungry. On the third day the sons heard what they thought was a bull-roarer sound and began searching in bandicoot nests until a strange hairy animal hopped out. "It's a sand hill wallaby," the men shouted, and they broke one of the animal's legs with their sticks before it could cry out, "You have lamed me; I am not a real animal, but Tjenterama, a man like you." The hunters backed off as the wallaby limped away.

Karora met his sons when they returned home. He led them to Ilbalintja soak and ordered them to sit in a circle around it. Then the honeysuckle juice rose and swept them down into the soak and underground to the injured Tjenterama, their new leader. They remained there forever and became objects of worship to the people who came later.

Karora returned to his old sleeping place in the soak. The people still go there to drink and honor him with gifts of greens. Karora smiles in his sleep, happy to have them visit.

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This myth is an example of the theme of ex nihilo creation with elements of the creation from chaos and creation by emergence themes. It also contains elements familiar to the creation by thought theme and is related to the general Australian Aboriginal dreaming creation theme. There is also an element of the theme that creation has gone wrong and must be cleansed by a flood. In the myth's mentioning of places and objects familiar to the Arandan aborigines, we find the common understanding on the part of a given culture that creation began in the center of its local world. The ratline bandicoot, for example, is sacred to the Bandicoot clan, whose specific creation myth this is, and Ilbalintja soak is a real place. The decorated *tnatantja* pole—a kind of axle tree as *axis mundi*, or world center, and the bull-roarer are still used in Arandan religious ceremonies.

See Also: Ancestors in Creation, Animals in Creation, Animistic Creation, Axis Mundi in Creation, **Creation from Chaos**, Dreaming as Creation, **Emergence Creation**, Etiological Creation Myths, **Ex Nihilo Creation**, Fall from Grace in Creation, Flood in Creation Myths, Imperfect or Accidental Creation, Sun in Creation, Thought-based Creation.

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ARAPAHO

Originally an eastern woodland Native American tribe, the Algonquian-speaking Arapaho migrated to the Great Plains and settled in what is now Wyoming, Nebraska, and Colorado. When in the late-19th century the American government deported many of them to Oklahoma, the Arapaho joined with the Cheyenne there. Others, who remained in Wyoming, joined with the Shoshone.

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Water was everywhere in the beginning. Flat Pipe floated on it all alone. The Great Spirit called down to Flat Pipe, suggesting that he create beings to help him build a world around him. Flat Pipe thought of ducks, and they appeared. He ordered them to dive below the water's surface to see what was there, but they could not reach the bottom. The same thing happened when Flat Pipe created other water birds.

Finally, the Great Spirit made Flat Pipe think of an animal that could live in water or on land, though Flat Pipe had to conceive of land before there could be any. The animal he thought of was the turtle, who agreed to dive into the waters to find land. After a long time, Turtle returned and she spit out a piece of land onto Flat Pipe. Out of this land grew the Earth as we know it, and out of it Flat Pipe made man and woman and all the animals, and they multiplied.

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This earth-diver creation myth indicates the Arapaho connection to other Algonquian peoples, for whom the earth-diver creation is familiar. The myth is also

an example of creation by thought. The Arapaho creator turns the flat pipe that is so important to Arapaho ceremonies into a culture hero-creator whose thoughts bring into reality the physical world. As in so many earth-diver myths—especially of the Algonquian tribes—the deliberate and brave turtle plays an important role. In this case the turtle brings up the clay out of which the land and humans, who are literally *of* the earth, will be created. For a people centered by an Earth-based mythology, who consider Earth itself to be sacred, nothing could be more significant than being born of that entity.

See Also: Animals in Creation, Clay-based Creation, Culture Heroes in Creation, **Earth-Diver Creation**, Primordial Waters in Creation, Thought-based Creation.

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ARIKARA

Traditionally a semi-sedentary agricultural people of North America, the Arikara speak a Caddoan language, as do the Skidi-Pawnee people, with whom the Arikara were once closely associated. After many conflicts with other tribes, mistreatment on the part of the American government, and several major migrations, the Arikara settled with the Mandans and other native Americans in South Dakota. It is said that the tern Arikara comes from the word *ariki*, meaning horn, and that the Arikara once used bones to hold up their hair-like horns.

***

In the beginning the great sky chief, Nishanu, made giants, but these creatures had no respect for their maker and were destroyed by a great flood. Only a few good giants were preserved as corn kernels under the ground. Nishanu also planted some corn in the heavens. Out of this corn came Mother Corn, who descended to the Earth to lead the people out. Since the people were still animals then, they dug their way out with Mother Corn's encouragement. Then the mother led the people from the east, where they had emerged, to the west, where they are now.

Mother Corn then went back to Heaven, but while she was gone the people made trouble and started killing each other. She returned later with a leader for the people, named Nishanu after his maker, in whose image he was made. The leader taught the people how to fight enemies rather than each other. Mother Corn taught them the ceremonies.

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This myth reflects the many migrations of the Arikara (in the myth they go from East to West). It has connections with the creation myth of the Mandans, whose land is adjacent to theirs. The typically Mandan figure of Lone Man is present in one version of the Arikara creation story. He is born of a plant and seems to have developed under the influence of the Christian missionaries. As in many Native American mythologies, corn and Corn Mother play important roles in this creation story. Corn is, of course, of great importance to any North American agriculturally-based people. The Arikara myth included here

is clearly an emergence myth, with Corn Mother as the midwife in a birth from Mother Earth, suggesting earlier connections with Native peoples further south and west. The myth is recited at spring ceremonies to celebrate the opening of Mother Corn's "sacred bundle," Mother Corn being with the leader, Nishanu, the *de facto* culture hero of the Arikara.

See Also: Birth as Creation Metaphor, Culture Heroes in Creation, **Emergence Creation**, Fall from Grace in Creation, Flood in Creation Myths, Mandan.

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Arnhemland. *See* Yolugu

ASHANTI

The Ashanti are an important tribe of central Ghana in West Africa. Their religion is animistic in that everything in nature is spirit-infused. Their supreme being is Nyame. The Ashanti have a popular trickster figure, Ananse, the Spider, who plays a role in their creation myth.

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Nyame, the high god, created the world—including the trickster spider, Ananse. But it was Ananse who made the first people, into whom the sky-god Nyame (Nyankopon) then breathed life. Ananse enjoyed working behind the high god's back, disguising himself (tricksters are always shape-shifters) as a bird and even challenging him as a creator, creating the sun, moon, and stars as well as night and day.

***

As a thief, Ananse resembles tricksters everywhere—the Greek Prometheus, for instance, who steals fire. And like the trickster/devil figures of Central Asia, he is creative even as he is mischievous. He is always a threat to the power of the supreme deity; perhaps a representative of human ingenuity in the face of apparent omnipotence.

See Also: **Ex Nihilo Creation**, Trickster in Creation.

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ASSINIBOINE

An Indian group of the American Northern Plains, the Assiniboine, or "Stoney Sioux," speak a Siouan language and probably were once part of the Nakoda branch of the Sioux family of nations. In this creation myth we are introduced to Iktome, one of the most famous of the Native American creator-trickster figures.

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When everything was water, Iktome sent various animals to find earth below the primeval sea. Only the muskrat

succeeded; he floated up dead but there was earth in his claws, and out of that earth the creator made land. He then said there would be as many winter months as there were hairs in his fur robe. Only the frog dared point out to Iktome that this would be too many months of winter and suggested that seven cold months would be sufficient. When he continued to argue his point, Iktome killed him, but even after death he signified seven months with his toes, and the creator-trickster gave in to the frog's idea. Finally, Iktome made people and horses out of dirt, and he taught the Assiniboine how to steal horses from other peoples.

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This Native American earth-diver creation tells of the creation of the world and people under the direction of the trickster Iktome, whose amoral attitude and actions differentiates him from many other creators. Iktome is often seen as the Spider by other Native Americans, especially the Plains Indians.

The myth, as it has come down to us, has had important elements of tribal life added to it in order to give those elements sacredness. The presence of horses in the myth (even though these animals did not come to North America until the Spanish brought them) is a good example of this.

The story of the muskrat as sacrificial earth-diver is not unlike the Anishinabe-Ojibwe story.



Sioux pipe bowl with a snake winding around the bottom and Iktome, the trickster, escaping it by climbing up the extension. (The Art Archive / Buffalo Bill Historical Center, Cody, Wyoming / NA.504.220)

See Also: Animals in Creation, Anishinabe (Ojibwe, Chippewa), Clay-based Creation, **Earth-Diver Creation**, Primordial Waters in Creation, Sioux, Trickster in Creation.

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ASSYRIAN

The Assyrian Empire of ancient Mesopotamia (present day Iraq) achieved its greatest size in the seventh century B.C.E. The Assyrians go back to much earlier times, however. With the Sumerians, Babylonians, and Egyptians, they created the amazingly advanced civilization of the ancient Near East, and not surprisingly, elements of each other's religions are to be found in all of those cultures. The Assyrians spoke Akkadian, a Semitic language that was also the language of the great Babylonian epic, the *Enuma Elish.* The Assyrian capital was at Ashur and later at Nineveh. Assyrian creation stories vary greatly from period to period, depending in part on the power of various deities at any given time. In an Assyrian creation myth used for religious initiation ceremonies, we find a pantheon of dominant male gods, but there are fragments in the myth of earlier ex nihilo creation myths suggesting a dominant goddess.

***

After the Earth and heavens and the Mother Goddess had been created, the great sky gods—the Annunaki—led by Anu (sky), Enlil (storms and earth), Shamash (sun), and Ea (water), looked out over their creation and wondered what else they needed to do. The beautiful Tigris and Euphrates rivers flowed majestically to the sea, and the destinies of Heaven and Earth were established, but something seemed to be lacking. It was decided that mankind was needed to till the fields, celebrate religious festivals, and constantly retell the origin stories. This new being would be made of the blood of certain sacrificed deities. So it was that the first humans—Ulligarra (abundance) and Zalgarra (plenty)—were created. Their destinies were established by the lady of the gods, Aruru.

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In another Assyrian myth, however, it is the goddess herself, Ninhursag (also Nintu or Mama, goddess of Earth) who creates the humans. This myth was apparently used as part of a birth incantation. The ritual itself depicts the birth process.

After the great goddess is praised and her feet kissed, she goes with the other gods to the House of Fate, where 14 mother-wombs (pregnant women in the ritual) are assembled. The great god Ea sits next to the goddess and asks her to begin the incantation. She does so, drawing 14 figures in the clay before her and then pinching off 14 pieces, placing seven to her left and seven to her right with a brick between them. Then Ea kneels on a mat, opens his navel, and calls on the mother-wombs to bring forth seven males and seven females. Then the Great Mother Womb, Ninhursag, herself forms the new beings.

During the incantation, the mother in the birthing house is encouraged to act



Detail of Hammurabi receiving the law from the Sun God, Shamash, on the Stele of Hammurabi. (© Gianni Dagli Orti/CORBIS)

for herself as the goddess and to bring forth her child safely.

Two elements stand out in these myths: the place of humans as servants of the gods, totally dependent on them for existence, and the imagery of birth. Clearly this is a society that was once dominated by a mother religion that has, over centuries, become patriarchal. Creation myths often stand as symbols of a turning point in a society's development, a renewal or rebirth.

See Also: Babylonian, Birth as Creation Metaphor, Clay-based Creation, **Ex Nihilo Creation**, Goddess as Creator, Sacrifice in Creation, Sumerian, Sun in Creation.

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Australian Aborigine. *See* Arandan (Aruntan); Dreaming as Creation; Kakadu; Kokowarra; Ngurunderi; Yolugu

AYMARAN

The Andean people known as the Aymaran are the principle indigenous group in what is present day Bolivia. It is generally thought that the founders of the city of Tiahuanaco were the common ancestors of the Aymaran and Quechuan peoples and, thus, of the Incas, since the Aymaran and Quechuan languages are related. The Aymarans have sometimes fought the Quechuans and have been in rebellion both against the Spanish and the Spanish-descendant ruling class. Today Bolivia has its first Aymaran president.

According to some, the Aymaran creator god was the snow god, Kun. Angry at human beings, Kun once covered creation with snow and ice, and nothing but evil spirits could survive on the frozen world. After this ice flood, it was the gods of fertility who sent their sons, the Eagle Men, to create a new people, the Paka-Jakes, who still live near Lake Titicaca.

It seems likely, however that the original creator god of the founders of Tiahuanaco was originally the sun god Pachacamac, who arose out of lake Titicaca, created the world ex nihilo, and, in some versions of his story, sent a flood to destroy the race of disobedient giants he had created after he had created the Earth. After the flood the creator made humans out of clay and

had them emerge as various tribes out of various openings in the Earth.

The myths of the Aymarans coincide in several ways with those of the Quechuan-speaking people we know as the Incas, so much so that it is difficult to separate the mythological traditions of the Quechuan and Aymaran peoples—a fact that supports the theory of their common origin.

In any case, essential to the Aymaran creation myth is the sense of a world that was imperfect from the beginning and had to be sacrificed in a flood in order for a new beginning to be possible. It is perhaps significant that sacrifice played an important role in both Inca and Aymaran religious practices, suggesting that sacrifice was necessary for renewal.

See Also: Ancestors in Creation, Clay-based Creation, **Emergence Creation**, **Ex Nihilo Creation**, Fall from Grace in Creation, Flood in Creation Myths, Imperfect or Accidental Creation, Inca, Sun in Creation.

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AZTEC (MEXICA)

The founders of the city of Tenochtitlan, which is now Mexico City, who founded the city in about 1350 C.E. are generally known as Aztecs, but, more accurately are Mexica. With the decline of the great Mesoamerican classical period city of Teotihuacan in the 8th century, various peoples emerged for periods of dominance in the valley of Mexico. The Nahuatl-speaking Toltec dominated beginning in the 10th century, but in the 13th century the area was invaded by various other less sophisticated Nahuatl-speaking peoples known as the Chicimec, among whom were the Mexica. It was the Mexica, who settled around Lake Texoco, who would give their name not only to the area but to the culture that eventually emerged through a combination of Mexica and Toltec traditions. The Mexica would dominate the area with a vast empire built on alliances until their conquest by the Spanish, led by Cortes in 1521.

The creation myths that we associate with the Aztec-Mexica are deeply influenced by the earlier Toltec culture, itself in all likelihood influenced by the traditions of the much earlier pre-classical Olmec and classical Teotihuacan



Huastec Stele of Quetzalcoatl. (© Gianni Dagli Orti/CORBIS)

cultures; the figure of the Feathered Serpent, for example, who eventually became known as Quetzalcoatl, the most popular of the Mesoamerican deities, has roots in the earlier cultures. When we speak of Aztec or Mexica deities and creation myths, then, we are really referring to a culmination of myths that emerged from the Nahuatl past. The two myths below are examples of this combined heritage.

One Mexican creation myth refers to the Ometecuhtli (Lord of Duality) and his female counterpart Omecihuatl (Lady of Duality) as the creators of all things and the parents of the major deities Xipe Totc (Lord of Spring), Huitzilopochtli (Sun God), Quetzalcoatl (God of Light, the Feathered Serpent), Tezcatlipoca (God of darkness, the Night God), and Coatlicue (Serpent Skirt Goddess). These creators were remote from human life and no particular worship or cult centers were associated with them.

A more familiar creation myth, involving the dismemberment of a primal goddess, is reminiscent of many other creation myths, such as those of Babylon and Iceland.

***

Quetzalcoatl and his dark brother Tezcatlipoca took note from Heaven of a giant goddess floating on the primordial waters down below. The goddess was devouring everything that came near her, so rather than allow the destruction of all creation, the gods decided to act. Becoming two gigantic serpents, they dove into the water and tore the goddess apart. The two parts of the dismembered goddess became our world—one part the earth, the other the sky. The violence of the dismemberment disturbed the other deities so they compensated by making The rendered goddess the sources of Earth's beauties. Her hair became plant life, her eyes became water, her mouth rivers, her shoulders hills and mountains.

***

Another Aztec-Mexica creation story involves the great goddess Coatlicue (Teteoinan), the Mother of the Gods whose dress was covered with snakes and whose necklace was made of human body parts and Lady of the Snake Skirts.

Coatlicue was at once the birth-giver—the one whose womb provided the moon and stars and the sun, personified by the great warrior god Huitzilopochtli—and the one who takes life back into herself; she gives life and brings death. Coatlicue is the center of one of the world's many miraculous conception stories.

***

It was said that Coatlicue was somehow impregnated by an obsidian knife and that, as a result, she gave birth to Coyolxanuhqui and the stars. As she was sweeping a temple one day a ball of feathers somehow entered her and soon she gave birth to Quetzalcoatl and Xolotl. Her other children became angry and decapitated her, only to be attacked in turn by the great Huizilopochtli, who descended fully armed from Coatlicue's womb. Some say that Huizilopochtli prevented the decapitation of his mother. In any case, Huizilopochtli was especially enraged by his sister Coyolxauhqui who had led the charge against their mother and, as

an act of revenge, he decapitated Coyolxauhqui and hurled her head into the sky to become the moon. Others say he threw her whole body into a mountain gorge where it remains to this day.

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The myth about the dismemberment of the primal goddess provides narrative justification for the Toltec-Aztec tradition of human sacrifice. Like the Indian goddess Kali, the Aztec goddess demands human blood as payment for nurturing human life. The Aztecs, and those who came before them, recognized and were deeply concerned with the fact that the Earth provides for life but that part of life's cycle is turmoil, disintegration, death, and a return to earth.

See Also: Animistic Creation, Babylonian, Birth as Creation Metaphor, Dismemberment of a Primordial Being as Creation, Duality in Creation, Etiological Creation Myths, Goddess as Creator, Norse, Primordial Waters in Creation, Sun in Creation, Toltec, **World Parent Creation**.

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BABYLONIAN

The Babylonians lived in the Fertile Crescent, the valley of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers in what is now Iraq. Their great civilization followed that of the Sumerians, which influenced their culture. These cultures brought high civilization to Mesopotamia several millennia before the Common Era. The best known of the Babylonian creation stories is contained in the *Enuma Elish,* the great epic named after its first two words, *enuma elish*, meaning "when on high." An ex nihilo type of creation myth, the epic was recorded in the form we have come to know best in about 1100 B.C.E. for a celebration of King Nebuchadnezzar's recapture of the city's statue of Marduk, the poem's hero. The *Enuma Elish* is written in a Semitic language—Akkadian—the language of Mesopotamia in the third millennium B.C.E. However, parts of the story contained in the poem have been found on clay tablets in cuneiform script dating from about 2500 B.C.E., and it seems more than likely that it is based in part on earlier Sumerian texts, especially since many of the gods mentioned are of Sumerian origin. However we date it, the *Enuma Elish* is one of the oldest extant creation stories, and one of the most famous.

***

Apsu, the primordial freshwater ocean, commingled with the saltwater of Tiamat to bear Lahmu and Lahamu; silt deposits that eventually formed land. Out of the union of Lahmu and Lahamu also came the gods Anshar and Kishar followed by their son, Anu, who fathered the mighty Ea and his brothers. Ea and his brothers roamed back and forth on the waters, and this bothered Tiamat and Apsu, the primordial parents. Apsu decided to act against the young gods, but they got wind of his plans and killed him. Now the wise Ea and the goddess Damkina produced

the great god Marduk. "My son, the Great Sun," Ea called him. Meanwhile, Tiamat created monsters in her anger against the gods for having destroyed her consort and for having made the winds that disturbed her great body. Anshar, Anu, and Ea attempted to subdue Tiamat and her squadron of monsters but were unable to do so. It was then that Marduk made his move towards supremacy. He would conquer Tiamat if the gods would recognize him as king of the universe. After a test of his powers over the sky, they so recognized him, and Marduk prepared for battle.

Taking the form of warrior, Marduk took up his thunderbolt and rode to the now stirred-up waters of Tiamat, who became like a huge monster—some say a dragon. The god defeated the first mother, the primordial goddess, and cut her in half to form Heaven and Earth: "He stilled himself to observe the corpse of Tiamat/ . . . He divided her like a shell-fish into two parts:/He threw one half to the heavens and called it the sky/ . . . he formed the firmament below." Now began the process of turning what had been a natural but chaotic creation (beginning with the commingling of Apsu and Tiamat) into an active but ordered process involving the use of Tiamat and her companion as world parents. In Tiamat's "stomach he made



The hero Marduk defeats Tiamat, the fearful goddess of the Deep. (© Mary Evans Picture Library / Alamy)

the sun's path./ He made the moon shine and gave her the night to hold." After creating the Earth, the constellations, and positions and responsibilities for the gods, Marduk had Ea craft humans from the bones and blood of Tiamat's lover, the chief monster Kingu. These new beings were to serve the gods, especially in the sacred city of Babylon, where Marduk (king of kings, he of the 50 names) and his fellow gods would have their sanctuary.

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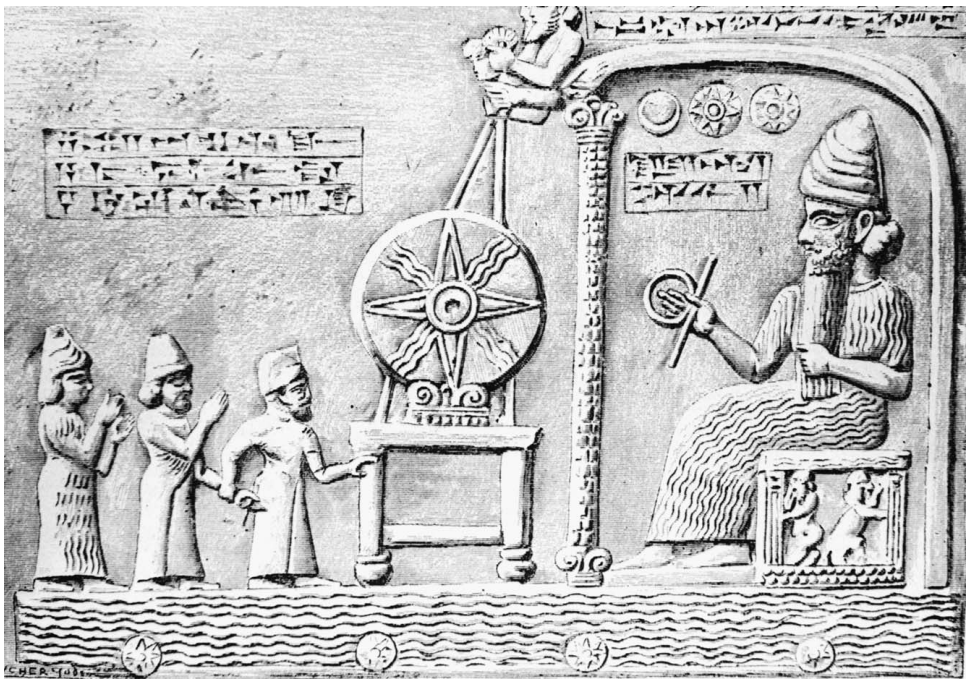
The *Enuma Elish* is an unusual creation epic for the polytheistic world of the ancient Near East in that the god-hero Marduk assumes many of the functions and responsibilities traditionally given to other gods in the local pantheon. It is also quite unlike the monotheistic biblical Genesis in that it concentrates on the process of creation rather than its results. The *Enuma Elish* served the Babylonians well. Living in an unpredictable river valley adjacent to the Persian Gulf, they would recite yearly the story of the battle between Marduk and the watery chaos (Tiamat) during the New Year's rituals in Marduk's temple, rituals that coincided with the spring inundations. It should be noted that despite the natural surroundings of Babylon and traditional elements of creation, perhaps adopted from the Sumerian cosmology, a dynamic is initiated in the *Enuma Elish* that would lead one to believe this story is a timely propaganda piece, written to justify Marduk's glory and control over the natural forces of the universe and Babylon's supremacy over the Fertile Crescent region. By extension, it is a story that very likely expresses a dynamic, if gradual change in Mesopotamian culture from the old matrilineal agricultural society of the pre-Semitic peoples represented by the earth-based Tiamat to one dominated by patriarchal Semitic military power represented by Marduk, a power that developed after the conquering of Sumer by the Akkadians and the emergence of Babylonian dominance. Here the old earth mother becomes a monstrous and chaotic power that must be overcome by male order represented by a cosmic warlord. Similar myths represent the movement from agricultural to military dominance in the post Indo European invasion period in Greece where the old earth goddess Gaia is superseded by the power of Zeus, and in India, where the god Shiva diverts the power of the old water goddess Ganga.

***

Another Babylonian myth resembles the Assyrian Mother Goddess creation story. The presence of the god Enki (the Sumerian name for Ea, god of waters) in this myth suggests an earlier source in pre-Semitic Sumerian mythology.

***

The goddess Mami (Mama, Ninhursag, Nunti) is called upon to create the first human, Lullu (the savage). "Let him be formed of clay, made alive by blood," she cries. The god Enki (Ea) supports Mami's demand and adds that the new being must be made of clay and the blood of a sacrificed god. God and man would thus be joined "unto eternity." The goddess finally gives birth to the being



Sun worship in Babylon. King Nabu-aplu-iddina visits the santuary of the sun god, Sippar. Symbols of sun god are clearly shown, ca. 870 B.C.E. (© Bettmann/CORBIS)

she has designed with Enki's help. What follows is part of a childbirth incantation similar to that found in the Assyrian creation and almost certainly in keeping with an earlier Sumerian ritual practice.

Mami. The womb-mother
Creator of humankind;
Create Lullu as burden bearer.
Form him from clay,
Give him life blood.
. . .

***

In keeping with the Babylonians' tendency to use myths for ritual purposes, the following creation story was used for the dedication of sacred buildings.

***

In the beginning Anu (sky) created the heavens, and Nudimmud (Ea-waters) created Apsu, the primeval waters. Then Ea took some clay and created elements necessary for the building of great structures. He made the Arazu, the gods of the various crafts—brick-making, carpentry, and so forth. Then he made the mountains and waters. He also made Kusiga, a master of ceremonies for the gods, and a king to maintain the temples. Man was made to serve the gods.

***

The architectural sense of the culture is preserved in a late Babylonian creation myth of the sixth century B.C.E. Marduk, the strong god of the *Enuma Elish*, is the dominant figure in that myth, which is

associated with the city of Eridu in the marshlands at the north of the Persian Gulf. The myth was used for purification ceremonies at certain temples.

***

Before anything was built—before the cities of Eridu, Nippur, or Erech were built, even before the dwelling place of Ea, Apsu, or any temple had been made—all the lands were under the sea. Then came Marduk to make Eridu, Babylon, and the Anunnaki (gods).

Marduk covered some of the waters with a great reed frame and filled it with earth to make a place for the gods and mankind. He created mankind with the goddess Aruru, and he created the animals, the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, and the fields and forests, giving them all names. He dammed up part of the sea and built Eridu, creating people to live in it. Finally, he built Nippur and the other cities of Babylon and made their people.

***

A very late Babylonian creation myth was written by Berossus, a priest of Marduk who lived in about 250 B.C.E. Berossus has combined many familiar forms from the *Enuma Elish* and other Mesopotamian creations: the primordial waters as a goddess, the dominance of Bel (Lord) Marduk, the sacrificing or division of the first being—the world parent—and the use of clay and sacrificed blood to create mankind. The presence of such beings as centaurs and satyrs suggests a Greek influence.

***

In the beginning there was only darkness and water. Out of this chaos sprang an army of oddly formed creatures: men with wings, two faces, or both; beings that were at once male and female; humans with goat feet; others who were part horse and part man. These creatures, all depicted in the temple of Marduk, were ruled over by Omorka, the moon (female). Marduk cut Omorka (a version of Tiamat) in two, made one half into the sky and the other into the Earth, and destroyed all of the monsters that had lived within her being. Then the world was empty, so Marduk commanded one of the gods to cut off his head, and from the blood and bits of earth he created the world—humans, animals, stars, sun, moon—everything that is.

***

In general the Babylonian creation stories represent a clear transition from a goddess-dominated birth-based creation to creation by the later patriarchal male hierarchy. Marduk might be said to be an ancestor of the all-powerful Abrahamic God who would create ex nihilo without female assistance. His story, like that of the flood that plays so important a role in the Sumerian and Babylonian versions of the Gilgamesh epic and so resembles the flood story of Genesis, would certainly have been known by the Hebrews exiled in Babylon.

See Also: Animistic Creation, Assyrian, Birth as Creation Metaphor, Clay-based Creation, **Creation from Chaos**, Creation Myth as Curing, Dismemberment of Primordial Being as Creation, Etiological Creation Myths, **Ex Nihilo Creation**, Flood in Creation Myths, Goddess as Creator, Primordial Waters in

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BAGOBO

The Bagobo people of Mindanao Island in the southern Philippines are, for the most part, a non-Muslim group who have to a great extent preserved a distinct cultural identity. They now survive by way of subsistence agriculture. Theirs is an ex nihilo creation myth.

***

In the beginning there was only the Creator, Melu. He lived in the heavens and was white and had gold teeth. In fact, he constantly polished his whiteness and he made the Earth out of the dried skin that came from this polishing. Then he made two small people in his image. But these first people had no noses, so Melu's brother offered to make them. Against his better judgment Melu agreed. But Melu's brother was not very smart, and he made the noses upside down, so that when it rained for the first time, the first people almost drowned, until they stood on their heads under a tree. Melu came along and asked them what they were doing. Then he saw the upside-down noses and turned them around. Everything has been all right since—with noses.

***

The first point to be made about this ex nihilo myth is that it is humorous. The creator is as concerned with polishing his notably white skin as he is with the creation. It is likely that the myth is based on perceptions of the white Spanish conquerors of the islands and/or the elite ruling class in general. There is also a sense that realities of family life in Heaven reflect the lives of people on Earth. Some of us are smart, some of us are not.

See Also: **Ex Nihilo Creation**, Imperfect or Accidental Creation.

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BALTIC

Little is known about the ancient mythology of the people we now call Latvians, Lithuanians, and Estonians—the Balts. The mythologies bear some resemblance to those of the Germans and

Russians, and perhaps even of the Finns. Marija Gimbutas and other scholars of the Mesolithic (7500–3500 B.C.E.) pre-Indo European period of the area depict matriarchal cultures of hunter-gatherers. Some scholars have suggested the existence of a creation from chaos Big Bang type of story in which a cosmic egg explodes and the exploded parts becomes the world—the yolk the earth, the white the waters and the shell pieces the sky and celestial bodies. The Balts of the post-Indo European invasions—people who eventually became Latvians and Lithuanians—believed in several supreme beings who were presumably creator gods. Whether Diviriks, Perkunas (Perun) or the Latvian Dievs or Dievas (derived from the Indo European roots of god and sky, the same roots that give us *deus* and Zeus) these were mostly sky gods and thunder gods sometimes related to the heavenly bodies. We do not know for sure how they created. A series of Lithuanian myths does tell of a supreme being who spends time in the human world as an old man intimately concerned with the agricultural affairs of the Baltic societies. In one story a drop of his bath water falls on the earth and becomes a human. This tale is perhaps indicative of an earlier myth of ex nihilo creation or of creation as secretion-based.

See Also: Bodily Waste or Fluids as Creative Source, Cosmic Egg in Creation, **Creation from Chaos**, **Ex Nihilo Creation**.

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BALUBA

Members of the larger Luba family of tribes in southeastern Congo, the Baluba, like several other groups in the area have a creation myth in which there is enmity between two creators.

***

The prime creator, Fidi Mkullu, was challenged by a trickster-creator, Kadifukke. Kadifukke claimed that he had been born directly of the Earth, that he had not been created by Fidi Mkullu. Enraged, Fidi Mkullu called on his son to fight the challenger and the son was almost killed in the fight. So the creator locked Kadifukke in a hut and set it on fire. But the trickster escaped and Fidi Mkullu had to admit a defeat of sorts; he proclaimed that he was white and Kadifukke black.

***

The point of this story seems to be a tribal belief in the inherent existence of blackness—translated as evil and trickery—in an imperfect creation that we assume was originally ex nihilo. Fidi Mkullu may have created the Earth, but Kadifukke is an integral part of the creation and cannot be denied even by the creator himself. It is important that he claims to have been born directly of

the Earth, the ultimate mother, a fact that suggests an inherent struggle in the cultural psyche represented by this cultural dream between the masculine and feminine forces of creation; between worship of the sky and worship of Earth as the source of existence.

See Also: **Ex Nihilo Creation**, Imperfect or Accidental Creation, Trickster in Creation, Two Creators Motif.

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BAMBARA

The Bambara people of Mali tell this humorous egg-based creation story.

***

Once the baby chicken and the egg went out to pick some lemons. But when the chick instructed the egg to climb the tree to do the picking, the egg said it could not climb trees. So the chick climbed and shook the lemons down. The chick and the egg ate them. Then the egg said it would climb if the chick would spread some dirt under the tree to soften any fall. This the chick did but left a pebble in the dirt. So it was that the egg, while shaking the tree from above, fell, hit the pebble, and broke. The chick thought this very funny, but a branch decapitated him and the branch thought that was very funny too. But then the fire destroyed the branch and thought that was very funny. So did the water when it put out the fire and the Earth when it soaked in the water. But then God and the Earth got into an argument and God dropped it into space, where it is now.

***

To the extent that a folktale-myth of this sort can be categorized, it would seem to be a an example—albeit a comic one—of a Creation from Chaos or Cosmic Egg creation.

See Also: Animals in Creation, Cosmic Egg in Creation, **Creation from Chaos**, Sacrifice in Creation, **World Parent Creation**.

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BANKS ISLANDS

The Banks Islands are north of the Melanesian New Hebrides Islands. The creator god there was the sun god Quat, one of whose major tasks in the creation was to discover darkness, thus reversing the usual pattern of creation from chaos in which life begins in darkness and light is established later.

***

Once there was light everywhere all the time. The light shone on the mother-stone, Quatgoro, and one day she broke open to release Quat and his 11 brothers, all named Tangaro and each representing a characteristic or a plant. The brothers grew up immediately. Quat carved the first humans from different parts of a tree, and then he pieced them together into puppet-like figures. When he had six

of these puppets, he lined them up and danced in front of them until they began to come to life. Then he beat his sacred drum and they began to dance. Finally, Quat made six of the puppets into men and six into women, and they became mates. Tangaro, the Foolish One, thought he could do what his older brother Quat had done. Using a different kind of tree, he carved six puppets and danced them into life, but then he buried them and forgot about them for a while. When he came back and dug them up they were dead and rotten, and so it is that we have death in the world.

As for Quat, he continued with his creative work. When he made pigs that walked on two legs, his brothers made fun of him, saying his pigs were silly-looking and too much like humans. Quat shortened the pigs' front legs and they began to walk on all fours.

Quat made everything: canoes, plants, animals, rivers, and so forth. Then the brothers began complaining about all the light, so Quat got into his canoe and paddled to the edge of the world to Oong (night). Oong was completely dark and without light. It taught Quat about sleep and gave him dark eyebrows and a piece of itself to take back to his own world.

On his way home Quat stopped at the Torres Islands to exchange a bit of night for some birds. From then on birds have always followed night with their chirping so that we may be ready for day when it comes. At home his brothers were waiting, and Quat taught them about beds (made of coco leaves) and sleep and made them all lie down. Then he released bits of night, and the sun began to disappear. "What is happening?" the brothers asked. Quat comforted them and told them to be quiet. Soon they began drifting off to sleep and they were frightened; maybe they were dying. Quat reassured them; "It's only sleep," he said, and they became quiet. While the Tangaro and the others were sleeping, Quat cut a little hole in night with a sharp, red stone. When the birds welcomed the light and woke the brothers, they saw the red sunrise for the first time and were very happy. They began their day's work. So it still happens.

***

The familiar aspects of this myth are the emergence-like birth of life from the Mother, who, as the earth stone is a type of cosmic egg containing the potential for all creation, and the conflict between the good and the foolish brothers—the de facto twins—in the process of creation, which mirrors the conflict between darkness and light that is the primary theme of the myth. Quat here acts both as creator and as culture hero, teaching the people about the elements of living. His brother is a version of the undermining trickster. As in so many creation myths, the sense of an essential duality in creation is evident here.

See Also: Birth as Creation Metaphor, Cosmic Egg in Creation, **Creation from Chaos**, Culture Heroes in Creation, Death Origin in Creation, Duality in Creation, **Emergence Creation**, **Ex Nihilo Creation**, Sun in Creation, Trickster in Creation, Twins in Creation, Two Creators Motif.

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Bantu. *See* Basonge; Boshongo; Fang (Fan); Swahili; Yao

BASONGE

A Bantu tribe of the southeast Congo region, the Basonge, tell creation myths that feature, like so many other myths of Africa, the theme of enmity between two creators.

***

The great creator god, Fidi Mkullu, was challenged by his son Nkolle (before he became arrogant his name had been Mwile), who claimed to have created everything. Fidi Mkullu said, "If you are so good at creating, go down to Earth and rule the human race creatively." So Nkolle descended to Earth and became a chief. But no matter what he did Nkolle could not solve human illness, human pain, or the problem of death. So Nkolle left to return to Heaven and the people begged Fidi Mkullu to be their chief. He agreed and did much to alleviate human suffering, proving himself to be the true creator.

***

In another Basonge myth, one that resembles a Baluba myth, Mwile is the high god and his credentials as lone creator are challenged by a trickster.

***

Kolombo mui fangi said he created himself, independent of Mwile. To demonstrate his superiority, Mwile spat on a piece of clay and quickly formed it into a living human being, whom he placed on the Earth. But Kolombo did the same thing. So Mwile said, "Make your human speak," and Kolombo replied, "Make yours speak first." Finally Mwile did make his creation speak but Kolombo could only make his move his lips. Then Mwile placed his hand over his human and the human died. "Can you destroy your man?" Mwile asked Kolombo. Kolombo immediately did destroy his man.

"Well, you have done this," said Mwile, "but now I will demonstrate that I can destroy you." So he placed Kolombo and his followers in a hut and set it on fire. But Kolombo, always the trickster, had his people dig a tunnel to his village and instructed a bird to lay some eggs on the floor. He then left with his people. The eggs exploded in the fire and Mwile assumed Kolombo had died. But when he entered the burnt out hut he found only egg shells.

***

The myths suggest the culture's sense of the tentativeness of creation. The high god is powerful, but not powerful enough to destroy the inherent and universal challenge to his power represented by Kolombo. Even God, the ex nihilo creator, can be tricked, and God is as full of pride as any chief. And he can and does kill humans as easily as he can create them.

See Also: Baluba, Clay-based Creation, Death Origin in Creation, Enmity Between Creators, **Ex Nihilo Creation**, Trickster in Creation, Two Creators Motif.

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BATAK

The six groups that make up the Batak people of northern Sumatra in Indonesia are known for their love of music. Traditional Batak believe they are descended from divine sources. The following Toba Batak myth is an example of this belief.

***

The first god was Mula Jadi na Bolon. He took form ex nihilo as a trinity embodying the upper, middle, and lower worlds. The trinity was represented by a world tree as axis mundi or world center that linked the three parts of the cosmos. A bird in this world tree lay eggs, out of which emerged still another trinity charged with governing the three worlds. Batara Guru would govern the upper world, Soripada the middle world, and Mangalabulan the lower world.

Human beings came about in this way: Sorbayati, Batara Guru's daughter, was betrothed to Raja Odap-Odap, the son of Mangalabulan. But when Odap-Odap preferred Sorbayati's younger sister, Si Boru Deak Parujar, Sorbayati leapt off the roof of her father's house during a musical performance and dance. Her body turned into bamboo and rattan. Si Boru Deak Parujar did not want the lizard-like Odap-Odap, however, and managed to escape to the primordial waters of the middle world, where she created the Earth on the back of the world serpent, Naga Podoha. Then, when Odap-Odap took on human form, she agreed to marry him. This divine couple produced the first human beings—twins named Si Raja Ihat Manisia and Si Boru Ihat Manisia. Among their many children was Si Raja Batak, the first of the Batak people.

***

Like many creation myths, this story reflects societal traditions and taboos. The suicide that initiates the creation of humans is the breaking of a marriage tradition involving the priority given to older daughters.

In a different version, Batara Guru was the primal being, the creator of Earth and the first ancestor of humans.

***

Batara Guru's daughter Boru Deak Parudjar dives from the heavens into the primordial sea, causing the god to send a bird down with soil to make land for his daughter and to serve as a place to plant the seeds of creation. Batara then dispatches a young hero, an incarnation of himself, down to Earth to defeat Padoha, the primal serpent of the underworld and to marry his daughter and with her to populate the Earth with the first humans.

***

The Batara Guru myth is of particular interest as an earth-diver creation story, one with many analogues, especially in Central Asia and Native North America. The story contains the particular element of the young woman falling from the sky, which is found in many Native American earth-diver creation stories.

See Also: Animals in Creation, Axis Mundi in Creation, Cosmic Egg in Creation, **Earth-Diver Creation**, **Ex Nihilo Creation**, Goddess as Creator, Indonesian, Primordial Waters in Creation, Sexual Impulse in Creation, Sky Woman Descends, Twins in Creation.

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Biblical. *See* Christian; Hebrew

Big Bang. *See* Scientific

BIRHOR

The Birhor, a people of central India who do not subscribe to classical Hinduism but who make use of Hindu deities in their myths, tell an earth-diver creation myth that reminds us of earth-diver creation stories among the Central Asians and the Native Americans.

***

The creator, Singbonga, arises out of the primordial waters through the stem of a lotus. He sits on the lotus and from that position sends a series of animals into the depths of the waters to find the mud with which he plans to create the world. After many animals fail in this task, the leech succeeds by swallowing some of the mud and spitting it into the creator's hand when he emerges exhausted from the waters. It was this tiny bit of mud that Singbonga used to create the world and its humans.

***

The Birhor creator, Singbonga, is also the creator god and the sun god in the tribal religion of the Dravidian Munda people of the Orissa and Bihar in India, people who worship aspects of nature, the highest form of which is Singbonga. The lotus, so important in Hindu religion and mythology indicates the Birhor use of Hindu symbols. In classical Hinduism, for example, the primeval lotus springs from the navel of Vishnu and is, in a sense, like the lotus in this story; the axis mundi or world center.

See Also: Animals in Creation, Axis Mundi in Creation, Clay-based Creation, **Creation from Chaos**, **Earth-Diver Creation**, Primordial Waters in Creation, Sun in Creation.

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BLACKFOOT (SIKSIKA)

Three confederated Algonquian groups in Alberta and Northern Montana—the Siksika (Blackfoot proper), Blood, and Piegan—are generally identified collectively as the Blackfoot. The Siksika people recognize a creator god they call Napi, or Old Man.

***

Old Man Napi traveled from place to place, creating mountains, valleys, deserts, plants, and animals as he went. He made his way north, where he created the Teton River. After he crossed the river he lay down to rest on his back with his arms extended out from his body and placed stones all around the parts of his body. These stones are still there. Farther north he stumbled over a knoll and landed on his knees. To mark the place he made two great buttes called the Knees, and they are still there too. Farther north he made the Sweet Grass Hills, the prairies, the bighorn, and the antelope.

Taking some clay one day, he made a woman and a child, named them people, and covered them. When later he took the cover away he saw the people had changed. He covered them again several times, and each time he uncovered them they had changed more. Now there were lots of people in addition to the first woman and child. Napi told them to get up and walk, and he introduced himself to them.

Then the woman asked Napi whether the people would live forever, and he answered that he did not know. "I will throw a buffalo chip into the river. If it floats, the people will die, but only for four days. Then they will come back." If the chip sinks, people's lives will end. When he threw in the chip it floated, but the woman was not satisfied. She insisted on throwing a stone into the river. "If it floats," she said, "we must live forever. If it sinks, people will have to die, but they will feel sorry for each other." When the stone sank, Old Man announced that death would end all lives, and the people were sorry for each other.

In the time that followed, Old Man taught the people how to live. He taught them how to hunt, how to use animals as food and clothing, and how to respect the animals. He taught them about fire and cooking and how to gain power from sleep and from the lessons taught by animals in dreams.

Old Man kept traveling north, and the people and animals followed him. One day he came to a steep hill, climbed it, and then, for fun, slid down it. It is still called Old Man's Sliding Place, and it was near here that the Siksika settled.

***

Old Man creates ex nihilo as well as from elements such as clay. His work, as is the case in the myths of many patriarchal cultures, is undermined by a woman, a fact that indicates a movement away from matrilinealism or matriarchy. Like Eve in Genesis, it is the woman who instigates the process whereby death comes into the world.

Old Man's tendency to use places he has rested or objects he has touched on his travels is reminiscent of the Australian Aboriginal Dreaming tradition. After he creates the people, Old Man remains in the world as a culture hero, teaching the people how to live.

See Also: Animals in Creation, Bloods, Clay-based Creation, Culture Heroes in Creation, Death Origin in Creation, Dreaming as Creation, Etiological Creation Myths, **Ex Nihilo Creation**, Woman as Source of Evil.

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BLOODS

An Algonquian tribe confederated in Alberta and Northern Montana with the Blackfoot (Siksika) and Piegan, the Bloods, like the Siksika, tell of the creator, Old Man, whom they call Napioa. But their version of the creation is of the earth-diver type.

***

Napioa, who floated about on the first waters on a log, sent the fish, the frog, the lizard, and the turtle to get whatever there was down below. The fish, the frog, and the lizard did not come back, but the turtle did, and he carried some mud with him. He rolled up this mud into a ball, and it grew to become the Earth. Napioa made all of the world except for the white men, and nobody knows where they came from.

After the Earth was made it was time for humans. Napioa made a woman, but he made her mouth the wrong way around and had to repair it before making some men and then more women. The men were afraid of the women, but Old Man told them what to do and the couples married.

Finally, Napioa made the buffalo and taught people how to hunt them. Now he lives far away in a southern sea.

***

Like the Siksika myth, this story contains elements that are slightly derogatory in relation to women ("her mouth was the wrong way around"). As in so many earth-diver creations—especially among the Algonquian peoples—the turtle is a central figure here, representing a solid foundation for the Earth.

See Also: Animals in Creation, Anishinabe (Ojibwe, Chippewa), Arapaho, Clay-based Creation, **Earth-Diver Creation**.

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BON (BONPO)

Bon is the pre-Buddhist indigenous religion of Tibet. It remains the religion of some Tibetans and is deeply rooted in Tibetan folklore and tradition. Bon has influenced the dominant Buddhist religion itself, helping to give it the particular characteristics that differentiate it from other branches of Buddhism. Central to Bon is the consideration of spiritual forces within nature. Bon rituals, which have a strong shamanistic aspect, work to achieve compatibility between human activities and the sacred world of nature. It is to what has been called the Tibetan "folk religion" that we must look for possible remnants of original Bon creation myths.

The myths of the Bon religion are almost always associated with origins, beginning with 'O-lde spu-rgyal, said to have been sent to rule humans by the gods above. Origin myths were told in order to make rituals effective. If a person was sick, the curing ceremony involved a recitation of origins or Creation. Marriage ceremonies included the retelling of the first marriage—that between the goddess who was daughter of the god of the world and a human man, Ling-dkar.

***

Arguing with the reluctant god for his daughter's hand, Ling-dkar suggests that the union of man and the gods should mean worship for the gods and

protection for humans. Upon leaving Heaven, the goddess is given a third of her parents' inheritance (her brother, as a male, receives two thirds). Her father gives her the masculine arrow and her mother gives her the feminine spindle.

***

In actual Bon wedding ceremonies each action is tied to this origin myth. For instance, the priest, who is a type of shaman, or medicine man, presents the groom with a piece of gold and the bride with a piece of turquoise, and then he and the couple sing the story of the arrow and the spindle. They sing of how at the beginning of time the union of two immortals resulted in three eggs. From a golden one came a golden male "arrow of life" with turquoise feathers. From a turquoise egg came a turquoise arrow of the female with golden feathers. From a white egg came a golden spindle. And from the sky and the ocean mist came Bon.

There are many variations of Tibetan myths of creation via a cosmic egg or eggs. One myth tells how in the beginning the elements became a giant cosmic egg. On its shell was the white cliff of the gods, and within it was a lake with a yolk containing the six classes of life. Out of this center came 18 smaller eggs, one of which was a white one that produced of its own accord the various parts of a being who became a man. The man named himself King Ye-smon. Other cosmogonic themes in Tibet include an animistic theme of creation from the actual body of a primordial goddess.

***

It is said that the Klu Queen who made the world was a child of the Void, that the sky came from her head, the planets from her teeth, the moon from her right eye, the sun from her left, and so forth. It was day when she opened her eyes and night when she closed them. Her voice was thunder, her breath clouds, her tears rain.

***

Some Tibetan myths say the original being was the "uncreated blue toad of turquoise," some say it was a tigress. In some stories, creation comes from the killing of a primordial being by a young hero, sometimes, especially in Ladakh, named Gesar, whom Buddhists would see as an incarnation of Avalokitesvara.

Finally, there are indigenous myths that see Creation as coming from the struggle between the powers of light ("Radiance") and those of darkness ("Black Misery"). In this model, the black lord creates all that is anti-existence out of a cosmic egg, while the white lord creates all that is good.

According to one myth, Yang dak dyal po, unimpaired potentiality, was, in the beginning, the only entity in the universe. From that entity's breath came the syllables that gave birth to the world. The actual creators of the world emerged from a white and a black egg. The first creator was a god of goodness and radiance, a god of light. He created all that is good in the universe. The product of the dark egg is the source of evil.

Some Tibetans say that Tibet once existed under primordial waters and somehow emerged with such force as to become the world's highest country.

The essential light-dark duality contained in the Bon myths has led many to trace a relationship between Bon and Iranian Zurvanism, itself related to Zoroastrianism. The emphasis on duality is amplified by the presence of two cosmic eggs in creation—one containing goodness, one evil. A more common symbol is creation from a single egg that contains in itself the potential for division, the war between good and evil, the differentiation of the sexes, and the duality of the universe.

See Also: Animistic Creation, Buddhist, Cosmic Egg in Creation, **Creation from Chaos**, Creation Myths as Curing, Dismemberment of Primordial Being as Creation, Duality in Creation, Etiological Creation Myths, **Ex Nihilo Creation**, Goddess as Creator, Primordial Waters in Creation, Shamanism and Creation, Word-based Creation, Zoroastrian.

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BOSHONGO

The Boshongo are Bantu people of Central Africa. Their creation myth is of the type that involves a god creating out of his own bodily fluids—in this case vomit.

***

In the beginning there was only darkness, water, and the great Bumba. One day, suddenly feeling a pain in his stomach, Bumba vomited up the sun. The sun shone on the water so hard that it began to dry up, leaving land. Then Bumba vomited up the moon and the stars and later various animals, many named after him. There were, for instance, the leopard (Koy Bumba), the crocodile (Ganda Bumba), and the tortoise (Kono Bumba). Men came last, and one, Loko Yima, was white like Bumba.

The animals that had come out of Bumba created other animals. The crocodile made snakes, the heron made birds, and so forth. Three children of Bumba also created beings. Only Tsetse (lightning) caused trouble. She was so bad that she had to be confined to the sky, from which place she still sometimes strikes her old home in anger.

***

This myth suggests a somewhat negative view of the world since the creative Source is vomit and the original land dries up in the too-hot sun. The only goddess mentioned, Tsetse (Lightning) causes trouble.

See Also: Animals in Creation, Bodily Waste or Fluids as Creation Source, Etiological Creation Myths, **Ex Nihilo Creation**, Imperfect or Accidental Creation, Sun in Creation, Woman as Source of Evil.

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Brahmanic. *See* Indian

Brule Sioux. *See* Sioux

BUDDHIST

Buddhism places little emphasis on creation as such, but in its early Indian form,

known as Theravada Buddhism, there is a large body of scripture attributed to the Buddha himself. In this scripture, called the *pitakas* (baskets), written in a derivative of Sanskrit known as Pali, there is a section in the *Sutta Pitaka* known as the *Digha Nikaya*, in which the Buddha speaks of the end of the world and a new creation. His vision contains several familiar elements of creation myths from elsewhere, beginning with the dominance of the primeval waters. There is no creator as such.

***

In time our world will come to an end, but also in time the world will evolve again. Then everything will be covered in water and darkness. For a long time there will be no sun, moon, stars, or seasons, and there will be no creatures, no humans. After a still longer time, earth will form on the waters, as skin forms on cooling hot milk. Then some greedy being from a former birth will forsake the heavenly radiance of the Buddha soul-life for the life of the body and will take pleasure in the earth's sweetness. Then others will follow, and they will gradually become more body than radiant Buddha soul. As their light fades, the sun, moon, and stars will appear. Gradually humans will develop sexual characteristics, which will be followed by passion and then by selfishness and other evils. In time the new world will come to its end.

***

This myth is an appropriate metaphor for the essential Buddhist understanding of the transience that colors the life of appearances and the suffering that is the inevitable result of the human tendency to fall prey to the illusions of *samsara*, the endless cycles of existence.



Buddha preaching, Sarnath, 5th century C.E. (Library of Congress)

See Also: Buriat, **Creation from Chaos**, Primordial Waters in Creation.

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BULU

The Bulu live in what is now Cameroon. Their creation myth is of the ex nihilo type.

***

In the beginning was Membe'e, he who holds up the world. His son Zambe was sent to create Man, Chimpanzee, Gorilla, and Elephant, each of whom he named after himself. One of the men he created was black and another was white. Zambe gave the new Zambes many fine things, such as water, gardening tools, and especially fire and the book.

The new beings stirred the fire. When smoke got in the white man's eyes, he went away with the book. Chimpanzee left the fire and the other gifts and went into the forest to eat the fruit there. Gorilla soon followed his lead, and Elephant just stood around not thinking about much of anything. As for the black man, he continued to stir the fire, but he didn't bother about the book.

When the creator came for a visit he called his creatures together and asked what they had done with the things he had given them. When Chimpanzee and Gorilla said what they had done, Zambe condemned them to having hairy bodies and big teeth and to live forever in the forest eating fruit. Elephant was sent off in much the same manner.

Zambe now asked the black man where his book was. The black man replied that he had not had time to read it because he was tending the fire. "Well," said Zambe, "that's what you will continue to do; you will have to spend your life working hard for others because you do not have book knowledge."

Zambe turned to the white man and asked him what he had done with the gifts. "I have only read the book," he said. "And that you shall continue to do," answered the god. "You will know lots of things, but you will need the black man to take care of you because you will know nothing about keeping warm and growing food."

So it is that the animals live in the forest, white men sit about reading a lot, and black men work hard but always have a good fire going.

***

This myth is deeply affected by a negative self-image that is clearly the result of colonialism. It justifies a way of life that the people have experienced. As in so many African creation myths, the creator god does his work and then leaves humans to their own unfortunate devices.

See Also: Animals in Creation, Etiological Creation Myths, **Ex Nihilo Creation**.

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BURIAT

The Buriat (Buriyat) people are made up of a number of Mongolian groups who live in the Lake Baikal region of Siberia. Their earth-diver creation myths resemble those of other Central Asians and many Native Americans. The first myth described below is said to be the earliest version of a creation story that is told in different versions by various peoples in Siberia.

***

In the beginning there were only the waters and the god Sombov until the god saw the water bird Anghir. Sombov ordered the bird to dive into the waters and bring back some earth. The bird returned carrying both black earth and red clay. Out of the first, Sombov molded the earth; out of the clay he made two wool-covered beings—man and woman—but he decided not to give them life until he had obtained souls for them.

While Sombov went off to Heaven to get the souls, he left a dog—at this point in creation still without fur—to watch over his unfinished work. The dog, shivering in the cold, did as he was told, but Shiktur, the devil, came by and promised the dog a fur coat if he would let him see the new humans. The dog gave in, and Shiktur fouled the new creations by spitting on them. When Sombov returned, he was, of course, furious. For its disobedience, the dog was condemned to a life of shivering in spite of its coat. Wherever the devil's spit had touched the humans the wool had to be removed from their flesh, leaving them—especially the woman—naked in all but certain parts of their bodies. At least the humans were given life and souls.

***

What stands out in this earth-diver myth is the presence of the devil-trickster figure that undermines creation and thus expresses the Buriat sense of life's failings. Creation is no paradise, whatever the creator's original intentions. The myth is also a "How-the-Leopard-Got-Its-Spots" origin story.

***

The originally shamanistic Buriats have been strongly influenced by Buddhism, the dominant religion of the area. In this earth-diver version of the god-devil creation, the creator, Burkhan, is the Buddha.

***

Burkhan came from Heaven to create the Earth and was met by Sholmo, the devil. Sholmo offered to dive under the primordial waters to find the material Burkhan would need for his work. When the devil returned with the material, Burkhan made the Earth by scattering dirt and stones on the sea. The devil asked for a bit of the Earth as a place where he could plant his staff. From the hole he made with the staff, all the evil creatures of the world emerged, especially snakes.

***

The vision of the creation contained in this myth, like that in the first, is one that has evil within it from the beginning; life is a cooperative venture of god and the devil, of necessary good and, apparently, necessary evil. There is no sense that the deity could or would eliminate the devil.

See Also: Altaic, Animals in Creation, Clay-based Creation, Devil in Creation, Duality in Creation, **Earth-Diver Creation**, Etiological Creation Myths, Origin of Evil in Creation, Primordial Waters in Creation, Samoyed, Siberian-Tartar, Trickster in Creation.

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BUSHMEN (SAN, BASARWA)

The Bushmen, live in the Kalahari Desert of Botswana and South Africa. They are said to be the oldest inhabitants of that region. As there are many Bushmen peoples, there are many creation myths. In this story the creator god takes the form of the praying mantis. His name sounds like "kaggen" (sometimes written as Cagn), with the clicking sound typical of the Bushmen language before it. In fact, the term means praying mantis, and that insect is sacred to the Bushmen.

***

Mantis, as the people call him, was the creator of almost everything, and in the old days he lived here with humankind. It was the foolishness of humans that drove him away in disgust and left so many of us hungry. Many stories are told of the creator in those days long ago. We hear of his wife Coti and two sons who taught the people how to find food in the earth, and of a daughter who married a snake. It is said that Mantis could become any animal he wanted, but most of all he liked becoming an eland bull. The elands are still his favorites, and only they know where he is. People also say that Mantis created the moon by throwing his shoe into the night sky.

***

A significant aspect of this story is a common motif in African creation myths; the creator becomes disgusted with humankind and simply leaves (Deus Otiosus). This creation myth expresses the human sense of the inadequacy of the species.

See Also: Animals in Creation, Deus Otiosus or Absconditus in Creation, **Ex Nihilo Creation**.

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CAHTO (KATO, KAIPOMO)

The Cahto people are a Northwest California Athabascan speaking people—distant relatives of the Navajos, Apaches, and inland Alaskan Athabascans—who live in greatly diminished numbers today in an area called Laytoville Rancheria. Their creation myth has many familiar archetypal elements.

***

Thunder and his companion, Nagaitcho, created the world from chaos. They began by repairing the old sandstone sky and stretching it with rocks that formed the four directions, also making a clear path for the sun. They made clouds by making fires on hills and mist by making fires in valleys. Then Thunder made a human. He took some earth and made the

arms and legs, and he used some wadded up grass for the belly and heart. He used clay for the liver and kidneys and a reed for the trachea. For blood he used ochre and water. Finally, Thunder made the man's genitals and his eyes, nose, and mouth. Out of one of the man's legs he made a woman. Now Thunder made it rain and he broke open rocks and trees with his power. There was a flood, and many people and animals died. The water animals—the whale, sea lion and others—were saved, however. Thunder placed redwoods along the new shores and mountains, as well as in other places where there was fresh water for the people and animals to drink. He made many animals—good and bad—the bears, rattlesnakes, deer, and so forth. Thunder took his dog and wandered up and down the coast admiring his good, green, well-stocked Earth. Then he went back north to his home, fully satisfied with his work.

***

It is notable that after the initial creation of the world from chaos, the creators proceeded cooperatively. Later Thunder, seemingly acting alone, made use of elements of the Earth itself to create humans, suggesting a sense of humanity as being literally of the Earth rather than an entity simply created and placed here. It is also clear that the creator left the world to its—and presumably humans'—own devices after the creation was complete. There seems to be no particular reason for the flood.

See Also: Animals in Creation, Clay-based Creation, **Creation from Chaos**, Deus Faber Creation, **Ex Nihilo Creation**, Flood in Creation Myths, Four Directions in Creation, Two Creators Motif.

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CANAANITE

The term "Canaan" was used as early as 3500 B.C.E. Texts discovered at the ancient site of Ugarit in Syria indicate the existence of a viable Bronze Age (c. 1200–300 B.C.E.) Canaanite (sometimes referred to as "Ugaritic") culture in what is now Syria, Palestine and parts of Lebanon and Israel. A Canaanite tribe known as the Jebusites, for example, inhabited Jerusalem when it was conquered by the Israelites at the beginning of the first millennium B.C.E. The Canaanites spoke a Semitic language closely related to Hebrew. Canaan was the cursed son of Noah's son Ham, who, according to the book of genesis in the Hebrew Bible, committed the taboo act of looking at his father's uncovered genitals. In a sense, then, for believers of the events in Genesis, he is the forbearer of a cursed people. The term "Phoenician" is commonly used interchangeably with "Canaanite." The Phoenicians were a Semitic-speaking people who established themselves along what is now the Lebanon coast beginning during the second millennium B.C.E. It was they who are generally credited with giving the world a viable alphabet system. When we speak of the Canaanite creation myth, as opposed to the Phoenician one, we refer generally to

fragments of Bronze Age myths discovered at Ugarit.

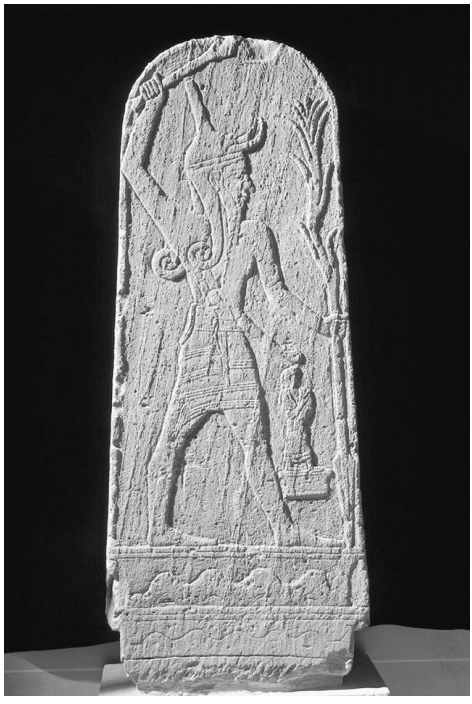
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Although Baal would become the dominant Canaanite god, it was the god El, the "father of the gods" and "creator of all beings," who was at least the titular head of the Canaanite pantheon. El lived on a mountain from the base of which flowed the world's fresh waters. He was thus the ultimate fertility god; the source of life itself. His wife and co-creator was known by various names—Ahirat and Asherah, for instance. She was the "Serpent Lady" and the "Lion Lady." It was she who decided on the various duties of the other deities. El and Ahirat/Asherah created all creatures, including humans, and all aspects of the world, including even Dawn and Dusk. Yet even El had antecedents in creation. His father was Heaven—the skies—and his mother was Earth herself.

***

Scholars have long suggested a connection between El and the creator god of the Hebrew Bible—himself sometimes known as El Šadday or Elohim (the plural of El, meaning "the god") and Israel being Yisra'*el.* The Israelites also saw Asherah as the spouse of their god until monotheism became fully established in their culture.

See Also: **Ex Nihilo Creation**, Father Creators, Hebrew, Phoenician.



Baal with a lance. (© Gianni Dagli Orti/ CORBIS)

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CELTIC

The history of the ancient Celts comes to us primarily from texts by Classical authors such as Herodotus, Hecataeus of Miletus, and, later, Julius Caesar, who called them Galli; people of Gaul. Some scholars suggest that the origins of Celtic culture can be found in the so-called Hallstatt culture of central

Europe in the ninth century B.C.E. Others trace Celtic origins to an aristocratic warrior culture of the fifth century B.C.E. Europe called the La Tène Culture. In any case, by the fifth century B.C.E. Celts were a major power in most of Europe and as far East as Galatia in Asia Minor. In 279 B.C.E. Celtic peoples overran and sacked Rome. Celts migrated to the British Isles beginning in the fifth century B.C.E., and a culture peculiar to the islands developed over the next centuries, cultures that can more conveniently be categorized as "Irish" and "Welsh," for example, rather than "Celtic." The creation myth below is pieced together from continental Celtic stories written down by the Romans.

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In the beginning Heaven and Earth were so close that there was little room for creation between them. One of the children of Heaven and Earth separated the pair by castrating the father, from whose skull the gods' children made the sky and from whose blood they made the sea. The evil son who castrated the father became god of the underworld; the good children became the gods of the sky and earth.

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The inferred myth depicts Heaven and Earth as the original parents, reminding us not only of Geb and Nut in Egypt but Gaia and Ouranos in Greece. The castration motif perhaps suggests a struggle for power among the ancestors of the ancient Celts or a tradition of conflicts between older leaders and younger ones for sexual priority. At the center of all creation myths that feature the division or separation of world parents is a sense that new creation—a new way of living—requires the space achieved by a breaking apart of the status quo.

See Also: Animistic Creation, Dismemberment of Primordial Being as Creation, Egyptian, Greek, Irish, Separation of Heaven and Earth in Creation, **World Parent Creation**.

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Central Asia. *See* Altaic; Buriat; Chukchee; Samoyed; Siberian; Siberian-Tartar; Tungus; Turkic

CERAM

The Ceram people live in the Molucca Islands (Spice Islands) of Indonesia. The myth below is as much an origin myth as a creation myth *per se*. It does, however, suggest sources of various aspects of Ceramese life. The heroine of the myth becomes, in effect a culture hero, teaching the people how to live.

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The nine original families emerged from bunches of bananas and then came down from Mount Nunusaka to the place now called Nine Dance Grounds in West Ceram. One man, Ameta, was much darker than the others, and he was very much a loner. He went hunting one day and killed a wild pig with a coconut caught on its tusk. No one had ever seen coconuts or

coconut trees at that time, so Ameta took it home and wrapped it for safe-keeping in a cloth designed with a snake figure. That night a man came to him in his dreams and instructed him to bury the nut. This Ameta did in the morning, and within days it was a fine, tall palm bearing coconut blossoms. Ameta climbed the tree to harvest some fruit but cut his finger. When he returned to the tree after fixing his cut, he found that his blood had mixed with the tree's sap to form a face, and in a few days he found a little girl there. The dream man appeared to Ameta in the night and told him to wrap the girl in his snake cloth and bring her home. This Ameta did, and he named the girl Hainuwele. In a few days Hainuwele was grown, and amazingly, she defecated things like dishes and bells, which her father sold.

It then came time for the nine families to perform the nine nights of the Maro dance at Nine Dance Grounds. As was customary, the women of the families sat in the center of the dance grounds handing out betel nut to the men, who danced around them in a spiral. Hainuwele was at the very center. On the first night she handed out betel nut, but on the second she gave the dancers coral instead, and on the third night she gave out fine pottery. In fact, she gave out more and more valuable objects each night. The people became jealous of her obvious wealth and decided to kill her. On the ninth night, having dug a deep hole at the center of the dance place, they surrounded her during the dance and edged her into the hole and covered her with earth.

Ameta missed his daughter and, guessing that something had happened to her, used his oracular skills to discover that she had been killed during the Maro dance in Nine Dance Grounds. He took nine pieces of palm leaf to the grounds and stuck them into the earth. The ninth one he placed at the very center of the grounds, and sure enough, when he pulled it out he found bits of his daughter's blood and hair. He dug up the body, cut it into many pieces, and buried all but the arms in the dance grounds. Immediately there grew the plants that are the staples of the Ceram people to this day.

Ameta took Hainuwele's arms to the goddess Satene, who then went to Nine Dance Grounds, built a huge gate there and stood behind it holding out the maiden's arms. She called the nine families and announced to them that in revenge for their killing of Hainuwele she would leave them, but that everyone would first have to try to pass through the gate to her. Those who succeeded would remain people, those who did not would become animals and spirits. So it was that animals and spirits came into being. Satene then traveled to the Mountain of the Dead, where anyone who follows her must die.

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The Ceram people tell of another sacred maiden like Hainuwele. Her name was Rabia, and she was taken away by the sun god, Tuwale. It was she who instituted the tradition of the Death Feast and who became the moon.

Ceramese society is agricultural; it is dependent upon successful planting and harvests. Appropriately, their creation myth is an example of burial, and rebirth, planting and harvesting. Hainuwele (or Rabia) becomes, in effect, the Great Mother of this creation and establishes

the connection between the gifts of the earth and her femaleness.

See Also: Animistic Creation, Bodily Waste or Fluids as Creation Source, Culture Heroes in Creation, Death Origin in Creation, Dismemberment of Primordial Being as Creation, Sacrifice in Creation, **World Parent Creation**.

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CHEROKEE (TSALAGI)

The Cherokee, or Tsalagi (the People) were originally from the southeastern section of what is now the United States and later were forced to move west to Oklahoma. Their language is Iroquoian in origin. The Cherokee tell several creation stories, usually dominated by a female sun. The tales are, for the most part, earth-diver creation myths, but there are elements of the emergence myth and the deus faber myth as well. They also contain the popular motif of the sun-catcher. The myths are always told at night and in winter so the fire of life might be rekindled in the listener.

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There was a time long ago when everything was covered by water. Anything that was alive then lived in Galunlati, the vault above the sky, where it was so crowded that it was hard even to move. Desperate for more space, the animals sent Water Beetle out to explore. He dove to the bottom of the waters and came back to the surface with a bit of mud. The mud spread out and became the earth-island, which the Great Spirit fastened to the rock sky with four rawhide cords stretching from the four sacred mountains of the four sacred directions.

The Earth was still muddy, though—too soft to hold the weight of the creatures. Buzzard was sent to find a dry spot, and eventually he came to one that was at least beginning to dry. This was the place that would become the Cherokee country. That country has many mountains and valleys, created by the furious movements of Grandfather Buzzard's wings.

When the new country was dry and hard enough, the animals descended from the vault above the rainbow, but they were bothered by the darkness in their land. They decided to pull Sister Sun down from behind the rainbow. They did this and then assigned her a regular path to follow.

It is said, too, that the Great Spirit made all the plants to go with the animals, and that he asked them to stay awake for seven days. He asked the animals to stay awake, too. Most of the animals fell asleep before the eighth day, but the owl stayed awake and was given the power of night sight. The few plants that did not sleep—the pine, the holly, the laurel, and a few others—were allowed to keep their hair all through the winter. The other plants shed each year.

The Great Spirit also made a man and a woman. The man pushed a fish against the woman and made her pregnant, and she gave birth to a child every seven days until the Great Spirit regulated things so she could only give birth once a year.

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Many Cherokee creation stories say it was Sky Woman who was the primal cause.

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Sky Woman was in her father's garden that is in Galunlati (Heaven), when she heard drumming under a tree and dug a hole to see what was going on. Sky Woman fell through the hole and spun toward the Earth. At that time the Earth was under the primeval waters, and Earth creatures lacked the spark of deep consciousness or understanding. They did have feelings, however.

The father watched his daughter fall and called on the winds to get the Earth creatures to help her. Turtle suggested that his back become a landing place for her, so the animals dove into the depths to find something soft to place on Turtle's back. Only Water Spider—some say Muskrat—succeeded. She brought up a bit of earth and placed it with her last bit of strength on Turtle's back; then she sank to her death.

Now the earth on Turtle's back grew, and Buzzard made mountains and other beautiful places by stirring the earth up through the flapping of his great wings. All was ready for Sky Woman, who landed on Turtle's back and immediately produced corn, beans, other plants, and rivers from her body. Most of all, she brought the spark of consciousness, symbolized by the Cherokees' sacred fire, which is always kept alive for the ceremonies.

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As noted above, since the Cherokees speak an Iroquoian language and originally lived in the eastern woodlands, it is not surprising that their creation myths share elements found in Algonquian and other Iroquoian creation myths. The Turtle as a base for the world is a popular Algonquian theme, and the creator who falls from the sky is popular among the Iroquoians.

The Turtle is a favorite totem figure, representing wisdom and the earth itself. The Sky Woman as a creator and culture hero, who provides the people with the means to survive, speaks to the existence among the Native Americans of matrilinealism. Her production of the necessities of life from her body suggests an animistic sense of the spiritual essence of all things.

See Also: Animals in Creation, Arapaho, Bloods, Culture Heroes in Creation, Deus Faber Creation, **Earth-Diver Creation**, **Emergence Creation**, Goddess as Creator, Onondaga, Primordial Waters in Creation, Sacrifice in Creation, Seneca (Onödowåga'), Sky Woman Descends, Sun in Creation.

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CHEYENNE

The Cheyenne are American Plains people of the Algonquian language group. The creation myth below, however, differs radically from those of other Algonguian speakers.

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In the beginning the Great Power made a beautiful world of earth, waters, and sky. Up north he made the most perfect place—a paradise where it was always warm and where there was always plenty of good food and water. In that land, all the animals and people could understand each other and were friends. There was no need of shelter or clothes.

The Great Power had created white people, hairy people, and red people. The hairy people were shy; they lived in caves, and eventually they disappeared. The white people were clever and tricky; the red people were close to the Great Power, who eventually told them to band together and travel to the more barren south. This they did, and, since the Great Power taught them how to hunt and to make clothes, they thrived until the Great Power warned them of a coming flood. To avoid the flood they moved back to the old north country, but they could no longer talk to the animals there. Still, they did well and improved their hunting skills.

Later the red people moved south again, but another flood came and they were scattered into the many tribes that exist today. They returned to the north, but their old land was desolate, so they returned south. After many years there, an earthquake and volcanoes nearly destroyed the tribes. After things calmed down, the Great Medicine Man in the sky gave them buffalo and corn, and some of the people established themselves in what is now the Cheyenne country.

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Because of the emphasis on racial distinctions in this myth, it is clearly a story that developed after contact with the white European settlers. It is, in effect, a re-creation epic—the story of how a tribe reestablished itself in the face of a great flood, itself a metaphor for the end of an old life and the beginning of a new one.

See Also: **Ex Nihilo Creation**, Flood in Creation Myths

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CHINESE

China has a textual record of some 3,500 years and a developed mythology since at least the Shang dynasty (c. 1766 B.C.E.–1123 B.C.E.). It is possible that the development of Chinese mythology began as early as 2205 B.C.E., during the purported Xia dynasty, but evidence is still lacking in this regard. Whether it were times of strife and upheaval, peace and prosperity, interrupted history or continuity, meticulous documentation of all aspects of life was crucial to China's various emperors and kings; writing was a form of power and texts had efficacy.

The texts that comprise many of China's creation narratives have multiple contexts and their meaning has been continuously open to interpretation, criticism, and commentary. Critically important texts include, but certainly are not limited to, the *Chuci* (circa fourth century B.C.E.), the *Shanhaijing*, *Huainanzi* (circa 139 B.C.E.) and the *Zhuangzi*, all of which allude to a time when things came into being, when worlds were created,

realities negotiated, and importantly, specifically in the case of the *Shanhaijing* (Guideways through Mountains and Seas), how and where specific mythical creatures resided. None of these ancient Chinese texts are necessarily coherent in their mythic outlooks, nor indeed are they devoid of alternative readings of Chinese mythology; what they are, however, are examples of the organic nature of Chinese culture. Furthermore, they provide us with some of the most foundational elements of Chinese culture, conceptualizations of the balancing act of *yinyang*, the inscrutable *dao*, ubiquitous *qi*, and the general order of things.

The basic stuff of the universe in Chinese cosmogonic myths is a primeval vapor, the breath of the universe, the primordial *qi* with its *yin* and *yang* characteristics. One example is the figure Hongjun Laozu, a deified Laozi whom we read about in the *Fengshen yanyi* as the personification of *qi*, or better yet *yuanqi* (primordial essence).



The goddess Nu Kua (half woman, half dragon) created the first humans out of clay. (© Mary Evans Picture Library / Alamy)

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Before Heaven and Earth had formed, there was a shapeless, dark expanse, a gaping mass; thus it was called the Great Glory. The Way [*dao*] first came from vacant space, vacant space gave birth to the cosmos, the cosmos gave birth to the Breath, and the Breath had its limits. The limpid light [*yang*] rose mistily and became the sky, the heavy turbidness congealed and became Earth. Because rare limpidity easily condensed but heavy turbidity congealed with difficulty, the sky was the first to form, and Earth settled into shape later. The double essence of the sky and Earth became *yin* and *yang*, the complex essence of *yin* and *yang* became the four seasons, the diffuse essence of the four seasons became the ten thousand things in nature. The hot Breath of concentrated *yang* gave birth to fire and the essence of the fiery Breath became the sun. The cold Breath of concentrated *yin* became water and the essence of watery Breath became the moon. The excess from sun and moon became the stars. The sky received the sun, moon, and stars, and the Earth received rivers and rain water, and dust and silt. Heaven is round; Earth is square. (*Huainanzi*, *Tianwen*, *Sibu beiyao* 3.1a, 3.9b; see Birrell 1993: 32)

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One common theme by no means unique to Chinese mythology is the idea of chaos in the cosmos (*hundun*). This is, at first, an undifferentiated chaos, quite literally pregnant with all possible realities that come to enable Chinese humanity. In this regard humans are understood to be bodily remnants of Pangu, the mythological 'in-between *yin* and *yang*' phenomenon, who constructs the universe over a period of 18,000 years. He died as he carved the Earth with the help of a *qilin*, tiger, phoenix, dragon and tortoise. He is often portrayed carrying a hammer and chisel.

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When the firstborn, Pangu, was approaching death, his body was transformed. His breath became the wind and the clouds; his voice became peals of thunder. His left eye became the sun; his right eye became the moon. His four limbs and five extremities became the four cardinal points and the five peaks. His blood and semen became water and rivers. His muscles and veins became the Earth's arteries; his flesh became fields and land. His hair and beard became the stars; his bodily hair became plants and trees. His teeth and bones became metal and rock; his vital marrow became pearls and jade. His sweat and bodily fluids became streaming rain. All the mites on his body were touched by the wind and were turned into the black-haired people. (*Wuyun linian ji*, cited in *Yi shi*, *Biji congbian* 1.2a; see Birrell 1993: 33)

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Another important figure is the goddess Nügua whom we know predates Pangu by several centuries. Nügua drags a cord through mud so as to fashion human beings.

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People say that when Heaven and Earth opened and unfolded, humankind did not yet exist. Nügua kneaded yellow earth and fashioned human beings. Though she worked feverishly, she did not have enough strength to finish her task, so she drew her cord in a furrow through the mud and lifted it out to make human beings. (*Fengsu tongyi*, Centre Franco-Chinois d'Etudes Sinologiques 1.83; see Birrell 1993: 35)

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The *Huainanzi* is crucial to the dissemination of this myth. We also read of Nügua as an earth-repairer, mending a rent allegedly made by Gonggong in the heavens. Nügua, or Nüwa, as she is sometimes known, is never simply a creator. She also fulfilled roles as a wife (to Fuxi), mother (blobs of clay became her children), goddess (especially for the Miao people), and so on.

All of China's legendary emperors (usually in groupings of three and five) come to represent some aspect of cosmogonic origins. Fuxi, for example, made especially famous during the Han period (beginning third century B.C.E.), was said to have invented nets for fishing, music, fire, and the measurement of time. During the Han period, Fuxi and Nügua are depicted in a serpentine embrace, two human heads, with snake-like torso. Another figure was Shennong, teacher of agriculture and medical knowledge.

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In ancient times the people ate plants and drank from rivers, and they picked fruit from trees and ate the flesh of shellfish or crickets. At that time there was much suffering due to illness and injury from poisoning. So the Farmer God [Shennong] taught the people for the first time how to sow the five grains and about the quality of the soil—which soils were prone to be arid or wetland, which were fertile or barren, which were highland and lowland. He tasted the flavor of every single plant and determined which rivers and springs were sweet or brackish, and he let people know how to avoid certain things. At that time he himself suffered from poisoning 70 times in one day. (*Huainanzi*, *Xiuwu*, *Sibu beiyao* 19.1a; see Birrell 1993: 49)

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Other heroes include Diku (also known as Gaoxin), a god of music, a figure who appears just after Huangdi (Yellow Emperor) and just before the demigods Yao, Shun, and Yü. Chiyou and Huangdi, who first appear in Warring States mythology, are both treated as gods of war during the Qin (221-207 B.C.E.) and Han periods (202 B.C.E. to 220 C.E,), and are used to justify the use of violence to bring order into the world. Not unlike Greek mythology, we also see in China a myriad of beasts and birds—felines, eagles, hybrids, owls, and so forth—all usually associated with individual deities. Often specific dynasties laid claim to particular myths and so we have creation/founding myths for early Chinese dynasties such as the Xia, Shang, and Zhou (twelfth century B.C.E.). In the case of the latter, Houji is said to be the father of the Zhou people as well as a god of agriculture. As always mythic deities such as these could be portrayed as cultural heroes on the one hand and degenerates on the other. For example, Yi the Archer, who famously saves China from the heat of 10 suns by shooting 9 of them down, is also cast as a villain who attempts to usurp power from the Xia dynasty (pre-1,760 B.C.E.). Finally, one notable figure is the Emperor Yü, mentioned above, who came to power when another famous mythological figure, Shun, chose Yü, over his own son to rule the empire. Yü subsequently rescued China from a massive flood, drained the nine regions, and discovered 81 subdivisions of these nine regions. Yü then built mountains, controlled river flows, and ordered the topography. Records of these feats can be read in the *Shujing*, a fourth-century B.C.E. or earlier text. There remain a plethora of other cosmic heroes and villains, creators and destroyers.

Creation myths are the building-blocks of a social foundation for all cultures. China's creation myths tap into a mythological corpus and are the narratives told of peoples, creatures, and places, and their struggles toward existence. Above all else they are the narratives about human action and what can be done to bring order to the world. The Chinese term for myth is *shenhua*, literally "divine narrative," not unlike various Western definitions of myth. As Mircea Eliade has taught us, myths assure humans that the actions they are about to take have already been taken in some age past. In other words, myths refer to events *in illo tempore*, at that time, in that space, these events and actions took place. The truth

of humanity for both ancient and modern China was not so much found as created. History too becomes part of this imaginative constitution and creation myths narrate a sacred history that informs both past and present, for what is the present other than some already distant past not yet fully imagined? As Anne Birrell, one of the foremost scholars of Chinese mythology points out, early Chinese myth prevailed as an amorphous form of expression. That many of China's creation myths overlap or conflict with each other serves to point out the polyfunctionality and to some extent collective identity inherent in many of the myths, thus allowing numerous social groups, dynasties, kings, emperors, and administrations to tap into these narratives so as to explain, legitimate, and authenticate their heritage. As such, here is our aporia, for myths or *mythos* can be as divisive and exclusive between social groups as they are interconnected and inclusive.

See Also: Animistic Creation, Clay-based Creation, Cosmic Egg in Creation, **Creation from Chaos**, Deus Faber Creation, Dismemberment of Primordial Being as Creation, Flood in Creation Myths, Goddess as Creator, Sacrifice in Creation, Sun in Creation, **World Parent Creation**.

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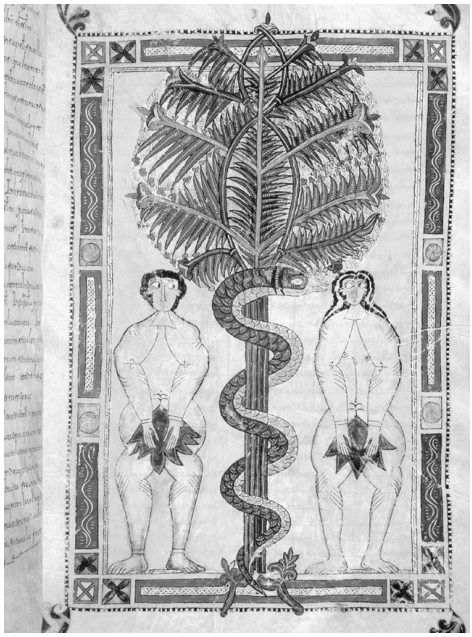
CHRISTIAN

A creation story of sorts appears at the beginning of the Gospel of John in the New Testament, the Christian addition to the Bible. Some say John was the man often spoken of as the favorite disciple of Jesus. Some say he wrote the Book of Revelation, too. Others say he was a church leader who lived in Ephesus in about 100 C.E. The following is the beginning of John's gospel as translated in the King James Version.

***

Chapter 1

1. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
2. The same was in the beginning with God.
3. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not any thing made that was made.
4. In Him was life; and the life was the light of men.



Manuscript Beato de Libeana, depicting Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. (© The Art Archive/Corbis)

5. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.
6. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.
7. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all Men through him might believe.
8. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light.
9. That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.
10. He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.
11. He came unto his own, and his own received him not.
12. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, Even to them that believe in his name:
13. Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.
14. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth.

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Not intended as an alternative or substitution for the Genesis account, John's gospel was seen by early Christians as a more spiritual document than the nominally factual gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. In the prologue to his gospel, John reveals the identity of Jesus as Logos (the Word). Logos, in Greek philosophy, was cosmic order or reason, the creative force behind cosmos (universal order), which was originally developed out of chaos (the void) or *ex nihilo*. For John, then, Jesus is the human form of the ever-existing divine Logos that created the universe: "In the beginning was the Word." The Word existed before anything else, he says, and the Word and God were one and the same. All creation came about through the Word. All life is alive with his life, his being. His life is the light that shines in the human being; that is, he is the source of human consciousness, the human soul. The Word sent John the Baptist to the world to prepare it for his coming. Then the Word was made flesh as Jesus. That is, Jesus is seen as son of God, the father. In its emphasis

on the duality of light and dark and its suggestion that to know the Logos was to find eternal life, John echoes much that was in the Gnostic tradition.

Later Christians would sometimes refer to Jesus as the New Adam and the new fruit on the new Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil (the cross), the who represented the possibility of a new beginning; a new creation based on Christian belief and principles. It is said he overcame death through his death and, as one prayer has it, "made the whole creation new." In this sense the cross/tree on which Jesus was said to have been hanged becomes for Christians the new world tree or axis mundi around which all existence revolves.

See Also: Axis Mundi in Creation, Creation Myths as Curing, Duality in Creation, **Ex Nihilo Creation**, Gnostic, Sacrifice in Creation, Word-based Creation.



The Fall of Man *by William Blake. (© Stapleton Collection/Corbis)*

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CHUKCHEE

The Chukchee are a Paleo-Asiatic people of northeastern Siberia, related to the Eskimos just across the Bering Straits in North America. Their culture traditionally revolves around reindeer herding and sea hunting. Their religion was once dominated by shamanism. Both myths below feature the popular northern trickster, Raven

***

In the beginning Raven, the self-created, lived with his wife in a tiny space. Bored with her existence, the wife asked Raven to create the Earth. "But I can't," he said. "Well, then," said the wife, "I shall create at least something." She lay down to sleep, with Raven watching over her. As she slept, the wife seemed to lose her feathers and then to grow very fat, and then without even waking up she released twins from her body. Like the mother, they had no feathers. Raven was horrified, and when the twins noticed him they woke their mother and asked, "What's that?" She said "It's father." The children laughed at the father because of his strange harsh voice and his feathers, but the mother told them to stop, and they did.

Raven felt he must create something since his wife had created humans so easily. First he flew to the Benevolent

Ones—Dawn, Sunset, Evening and the others—for advice, but they had none to give. So he flew on to where some strange beings sat. They were to be the seeds, they said, of the new people, but they needed an Earth. Could Raven create one? Raven said he would try, and he and one of the man-seeds flew off together. As he flew Raven defecated and urinated, and his droppings became the mountains, valleys, rivers, oceans, and lakes. His excrement became the world we live in. The man-seed with him asked Raven what the people would eat, and Raven made plants and animals.

Eventually there were many men from the original seed, but there were no women until a little spider woman appeared and made women. The men did not understand about women, so Raven with great pleasure demonstrated copulation with the women; later, also with pleasure, the men followed his example.

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Another Chukchee story says that in the beginning there were two beings, Raven and Creator. Raven told Creator to make a man, and Creator did as he was told. The man was animal-like—hairy and four-legged, with great claws and teeth. He could catch any animal he hunted, and he ate everything raw. Creator feared that he would destroy all of living creation, so Raven suggested that they slow man down and make him less dangerous by shortening his arms and making him walk upright. They also substituted clothes for hair. So that man could eat regularly, Creator made reindeer out of various plants and made the people herders. So that the people could get around, he created dogs out of wood, and he gave the people the characteristic Chukchee walking stick for support. It happened that one Chukchee family lost a dog and Raven found it. That's why Raven has a dog now.

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Creation by defecation or urination, as well as unbridled eroticism are appropriate acts and characteristics of the creative but amoral trickster archetype of which Raven is almost always an example. Scholars of a Freudian orientation have tended to see male anal creation myths as examples of the male's envy of the woman's ability to procreate. It is also important to note the connection between tricksters and shamans. In the first of these Chukchee myths Raven, like shamans, has direct access to the spirit world—the benevolent Ones and the mysterious seeds out of which humans were created. Raven in the first myth is more than a trickster, however; he is self-created, an ex nihilo creator. In the second myth he plays the more typical role of trickster associated with the primary creator. Though associated with a somewhat distant creator, he is a worldly assistant with worldly desires, especially sexual ones. In this myth The trickster is depicted as a more reasonable creator than the somewhat naïve and even clumsy primary creator. In these myths Raven does not appear to play the role of undermining Devil-like figure that tricksters often play in creation myths.

See Also: Altaic, Animals in Creation, Buriat, Bodily Waste or Fluids as Creation Source, **Ex Nihilo Creation**, Goddess as Creator, Raven in Creation, Shamanism and Creation,

Sexual Impulse in Creation, Siberian-Tartar, Trickster in Creation, Twins in Creation, Two Creators Motif.

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CREEK (MUSKOGEE)

The Creeks are a Muskhogeon-speaking tribe of Native Americans who were part of the so-called "Five Civilized Tribes" (Creek, Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Seminole) forcibly removed to Oklahoma from the southeast in the 19th century. Theirs has traditionally been a sedentary, agricultural way of life. The story retold here was originally conveyed by Victoria Whitewolf to her granddaughter Muskeke Iskwew, a Creek medicine woman.

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In the beginning the Creator made a perfect world of trees, mountains, rivers, lakes, and plants. But when he looked around, happy with his world, he knew there was something missing. There was plenty of beauty but nothing to enjoy it. So it was that the Creator decided to make the animals—animals of all kinds—who also enjoyed the new Earth. Things went well with the animals and their Earth, but after a while the animals complained of a lack of purpose in their lives.

The Creator thought about this and then agreed to make a change. He would give the animals a weaker being that they would protect and teach. This new creation would be weak and ignorant. The new creature was humankind—a man and a woman—and the animals were delighted to help them out, teaching them how to survive.

But soon trouble began. The first humans made more humans and the new human population became stronger and more demanding of the animals. One day, when a man demanded more food of an animal than he needed, the animal refused and the man crushed the animal's skull with a rock. He then used the animal's flesh as meat and its skin as clothes. When he told the other humans about this the humans began the process of killing animals for their own use.

Angry at what he saw, the Creator called a meeting of humans and animals and announced that he would take all the animals to the spirit world as a punishment of the humans. It was only because the animals took pity on the foolish humans that the Creator relented and left the animals on Earth. But to protect them he took away the ability of humans and animals to talk with each other and he made the animals fear humans so that they would naturally be more difficult for humans to kill.

The Creator also instituted the totem tradition, creating spirit animals to represent human groups for guidance and protection.

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This myth is as much an origin myth as a creation myth *per se*. It does tell that the world was created but not how. What it concentrates on is the relationship

between animals and humans in the presence of a benevolent creator. Its primary purpose would seem to be the description of the origin of the totem system, the sacred remnant of the days when humans and animals communicated by speech and lived in harmony. Underlying the myth is the belief in the sacredness of animals and the common motif of the destructiveness and corruption that humans bring to Creation, resulting in the loss of a paradise.

See Also: Animals in Creation, Etiological Creation Myths, **Ex Nihilo Creation**, Fall from Grace in Creation, Origin of Evil in Creation, Yuchi (Tsoyaha).

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CROW (ABSARKOES, APSAALOOKE)

The Absarkoes, which means "Sparrow Hawks," not "Crow," are a Plains Indian tribe of the Siouan family who live now in Montana. Like many Native Americans—their fellow Siouan language speakers the Assiniboine, for example—they tell an earth-diver creation myth that involves the participation of a trickster. In this case the Creator is Old Man Coyote and the Trickster is Little Coyote.

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Once there was only water and Old Man Coyote, the Creator. "I wish I had someone to talk to," he said, and when he turned around he found two red-eyed ducks. "How about diving down to see if there is anything under the water," he said to them. The first duck dove and stayed under for so long that Coyote thought he was dead. After a while, though, he came back and said he had hit bottom. On a second dive he found a root; on a third dive he found a lump of earth.

Coyote was pleased and announced that he would make a place to live using the mud. When he breathed on it, it grew and grew until it was the Earth. Coyote then planted the root that the duck had brought up, and this started the plants and trees growing.

"Isn't this beautiful?" Old Man Coyote asked the ducks. They said it was, but that it needed valleys, hills, mountains, rivers, and lakes. Coyote made these, and the ducks praised him for his creative talent and cleverness. Coyote was pleased by their reaction, and when they complained of a lack of companions, he took clay and formed people and then more ducks.

Coyote was not pleased, however. "I have made only males," he cried. Instantly he made females, and the people and ducks were happy. They had a good time and multiplied.

One day Old Man Coyote came across a little version of himself, Little Coyote. "Where did you come from, Little Brother?" he asked. "I don't know, Big Brother," Little Coyote answered. "I'm just here."

"Well, Little Brother, I am Old Man Coyote, and I made everything you can see."

"But you need more animals," said Little Coyote. "You've only made ducks and people."

"You're right," said Old Man. Then, as he named animals, they came into being—bear, elk, deer, antelope. The bear complained that the new animals were bored, even though Coyote had made males and females: "That male-female thing gets boring, too, after a while," said Bear.

So Coyote made Prairie Chicken out of Bear's claw, and it taught the other animals how to dance. Bear went on complaining, however, asking for one thing or another and finally claiming that only he should be allowed to dance because he was so big and grand. When Old Man Coyote warned him not to be so arrogant, especially to his maker, Bear claimed he had made himself. This made Old Man Coyote angry, and from that moment Bear was made to live away from the other animals in a den and to sleep all winter so he would be out of the way.

Everything went fine until Little Coyote suggested that the people Old Man Coyote had made early in the creation were doing poorly. Old Man Coyote then showed these people about making tepees, fires, and weapons and also taught them how to hunt. He gave weapons only to the people, because only they were slow and unprotected by fur, feathers, or claws.

Then Little Coyote did something bad. He suggested to Old Man Coyote that he give the people different languages so they would misunderstand each other and use their weapons in wars. He convinced the creator that people would thrive as warriors, horse thieves, and woman thieves. He talked about heroism, war dances, and songs of heroic deeds; he talked of honor. Old Man Coyote did what Little Coyote said, and the people had different languages and made war on each other. Some became heroes and chiefs, and some became horse thieves and woman thieves.

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There are many familiar elements in this myth. Most obvious is the earth-diver motif. There is also an element of creation by thought, word, and breath (often a metaphor for spirit), and clay-based creation. As in so many creation myths of the Native Americans (and Africans and Central Asians), the trickster—here the ubiquitous Coyote in the person of Little Coyote—is an essential and ultimately disruptive element in creation and particularly in the development of human society. The trickster is the personification of the amoral and the creative aspect of evil in the human personality. The closeness of evil to the source of creation itself is indicated by the fact that Coyote as Old Man Coyote is himself the creator. Discord, represented here by language differences and the resulting use of misunderstandings and war, are instituted by the wily trickster, himself genuinely creative, the "little brother" of the creator.

See Also: Animals in Creation, Arapaho, Assiniboine, Clay-based Creation, Coyote in Creation, **Earth-Diver Creation**, Etiological Creation Myths, Sexual Impulse in Creation, Thought-based Creation, Trickster in Creation, Two Creators Motif, Word-based Creation.

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CUEBO

The Cuebo are an indigenous people of what is now Colombia in South America. Their creation story is odd because of the way the world was made—or not made.

***

The world was always here; no creator could have made the world. The Cuebo themselves were here before any other people, and they were born of the rocks in the Vaupas River. At first they were anaconda snakes, but when they molted they became the people and settled where they live now.

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The Cuebo do have gods—a god of the dead, who lives in the sky, and the god Quwai, who created some things, primarily fish for the people to eat. Quwai also taught the people how to weave and how to mourn the dead. There is also the god Avya, who is both the sun and the moon.

The cultural idea that the Cuebo existed before any other people establishes their significance as a people. That they were born of the powerful Anaconda establishes their sense of power and importance. The god Quwai serves in the universal role of culture hero, teaching the people how to live.

See Also: Animals in Creation, **Creation from Chaos**, Culture Heroes in Creation, **Ex Nihilo Creation**, Sun in Creation.

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CUPEÑO (KUUPANQAXWICHEN)

The Cupeño of Southern California, an Uto-Azteca speaking group of Native Americans, were once hunter gathers. Having been removed from place to place, the remaining Cupeño live mostly with the Luiseño people. The popular Coyote is a prominent factor in their creation myth.

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In ancient times there was darkness and emptiness everywhere, but in space there hung a bag that opened and released Coyote and Wild Cat. The two could not agree on which had come first. The argument was decided when it was Coyote's voice that was heard first by the unformed humans who lived in the void. When they heard Coyote, they rose up and sang the sacred songs, and since then Coyote has been important to them—much more so than Wild Cat.

***

As in so many Native American creations, animals are the central figures here. The famous Coyote is one of the first two products of a creation from chaos and plays the role here not so much as a trickster but as a culture hero, inspiring and teaching the people. Coyote, as the source of human consciousness, is the soul of the tribe, perhaps endowing it with his inherent cleverness and originality.

See Also: Animals in Creation, Coyote in Creation, **Creation from Chaos**, Culture Heroes in Creation, **Ex Nihilo Creation**.

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Dahomey. *See* Fon

DHAMMAI (MIJI)

Known also as the Mijis, the Dhammai are one of several non-Hindu tribal people of northeastern India. They are closely associated with another tribal group, the Hrusso (Aka). The Dhammai creation myth is a world parent story.

***

Before there was anything, Shuzanghu lived alone with his wife, Zumaing-Nui. They lived on high and were tired of having no place to set their feet. Zumaing-Nui got her husband to promise to be faithful and loving to her in return for her solving their problem. Shuzanghu agreed and made love to his wife.

In time the couple gave birth to a girl (Earth) and a boy (Sky). Since there was nothing to support their weight, however, they fell down and were swallowed by Worm below.

Upset by what had happened, the first parents set a trap for Worm before their next child was born. When they caught him, they split his body open and found their children, Earth and Sky. So the lower part of Worm's body became our earth and the upper part our sky. As for Sky and Earth, they became husband and wife and gave birth to gods, who were mountains. Then they separated, but not before producing two frogs who married and made the first humans. These humans were covered with thick hair, but they married and made the people as we know them.

***

The defeat of Worm, an archetypal relative of the Hebrew Leviathan, the Mesopotamian Tiamat, and the Norse Ymir, suggests the defeat of an old culture and the formation of a new one. It is out of the defeated monster's body that the rescued Earth and Sky emerge, and it is Earth and Sky who gave birth to humans and then separate so that more creation could occur between them. This separation of the world parents to allow for further creation is a popular creation motif and perhaps conveys a natural human sense that we need space to become ourselves, independent of parents and even gods.

See Also: Animals in Creation, Animistic Creation, Babylonian, Dismemberment of Primordial Being as Creation, Separation of Heaven and Earth in Creation, **World Parent Creation**.

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DIEGUEÑOS

The collective term Diegueños was given by the Spanish to Yuman-speaking Native Americans in the area of what is now San Diego, California. The creation myth of this southern California tribe contains the world parent motif of the separation of Earth and Sky, like that of the Egyptian story of Geb and Nut or the Greek

myth of Ouranos and Gaia, among many others.

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When the creator, Tu-chai-pai, made the world, the Earth was female and the Sky was male. The Sky came down over the earth, which was only a lake covered with rushes, and the creator and his brother were cramped between them. Tu-chai-pai took tobacco in his hands and rubbed it and blew on it three times. With this, Sky rose a bit over Earth. When both brothers blew the tobacco and said the magic words, the sky went all the way up. Now the creators made the four directions. Later, since they knew that people were coming, they made hills, valleys, and lakes. They made forests for wood so the men could build things.

Tu-chai-pai announced that it was time to make people. He took mud and made the Indians first and then the Mexicans. It was more difficult making women than men. The creator told the people that they would not have to die but that they would have to walk all the time. He did give them the sleep that could make them still at night. Otherwise, he said, they should walk towards the light in the east.

The people found the light of the sun and were happy. The creator's brother then made the moon. The people were told that whenever the moon got small and seemed to die, they must run races. After they did this, the creator was finished, but he continued thinking for a long time.

***

This myth explains the existence of certain cultural traditions, such as running races according to the cycles of the moon. The fact that the creator found more difficulty making women than men suggests the recognition of female complexity and, thus, value.

The fact that the creator tells the people they will not have to die suggests the existence of another stage of creation not included here; namely, the institution of death. Presumably, in the creator's thoughts noted at the end of the myth, the thought of the institution of death eventually came to fruition.

See Also: Clay-based Creation, Four Directions in Creation, Separation of Heaven and Earth in Creation, Thought-based Creation, **World Parent Creation**.

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DINKA

The Dinka are descendants of ancient settlers along the Nile in Sudan. Their creator is a divine force, Nhialac ("Divinity"), which apparently created ex nihilo and that involves itself very little with the affairs of humans. The primary concern in the generally accepted creation myth is the creation of humans.

***

Nhialac created the world from nothing, then humans, Abuk and Garang. There are many versions of this creation. Some say Divinity blew its nose and produced the humans. Others say that the humans came from the sky and were placed in the river, from which

they emerged fully formed. Still others say that the first humans were molded as clay figures and placed in pots to mature. According to that story Gararg emerged from his pot fully manned with a spear—his penis—and Abuk emerged from hers with fully developed maternal breasts. Divinity told the couple to multiply and announced that although their children would die, they would only remain dead for 15 days. Garang objected to this on the grounds that there would be too many people to feed if everyone lived. In so objecting he, in effect, introduced death into the world even as he asserted human independence and caused Nhialac to withdraw from human activity. Abuk was as contrary as her mate. She broke Nhialac's command that she and her mate, Garang, plant one seed of grain a day to meet their needs. Instead, she decided to plant more and in doing so she alienated the creator causing him to break the rope that tied Earth to his home in Heaven. Since that time humans have been plagued by work, sickness, and death.

***

The disobedient actions of the first humans here is much more pronounced than, for instance, the guilty actions of the biblical first parents, Adam and Eve. There is a kind of pride in what appears to be human common sense in the face of an arbitrary divinity. However, this myth does demonstrate that woman are often regarded as both dangerous and inferior to men.

See Also: Bodily Waste or Fluids as Creation Source, Clay-based Creation, Death Origin in Creation, **Ex Nihilo Creation**, Fall from Grace in Creation, Woman as Source of Evil.

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DOGON

The Dogon people of Africa live near and in the famous Bandiagara Cliffs in the central plateau region of present day Mali as well as in Western Sudan. They are a patrilineal culture who stress the ideal of harmony in an animistic religion. Their mythology is among the most complex in Africa. Their creation myth is characterized by ritual incest.

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In the beginning, the world egg was shaken by seven huge stirrings of the universe. It divided into two birth sacs, each containing a set of twins who were fathered by the supreme being, Amma, on the maternal egg (some say that the cosmic egg in this case was Amma himself). In each placenta was a male and a female twin, but each twin contained both the male and female essence. The twins are known as the Nummo. By some fluke, a male twin called Yorugu broke out of one of the placentas before the proper time, and the piece of the sac from which he broke forth became the earth. When he tried to go back to the egg to retrieve his twin, she had disappeared. In fact, she had been placed in the other placenta with the other set of twins. Yorugu went back down to the new earth

and copulated with it—his own maternal placenta—but did not succeed in creating people. Seeing this, Amma sent the other twins down to procreate, and so it is that humans came from the original joining of brother, sister, and cousin twins.

***

Since every human being is descended from these twins, every human being is, in a sense, a descendant of a mother and a twin brother or a father and a twin sister. In a complex religious sense, brothers and sisters are seen as parents of each other's offspring. It has been suggested by many anthropologists that incest stories are an attempt to support particular kinship systems. Such is the case with the Dogon cosmogony. The Dogon are a patrilineal people (ownership passes through the male line). If possible, a man will marry his first cousin by his maternal uncle after having intercourse with his future wife's mother. This is because normal incest taboos prevent intercourse with the mother—the ideal spouse—and substitute the aunt/mother-in-law. The Dogon creation—a cosmic egg myth—validates this reenactment of mythical incest.

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According to one understanding of this creation myth, the two sets of twins were individually androgynous, and in Dogon ritual practice, androgyny is replaced by adult sexual differentiation only when the child has undergone circumcision or partial clitoridectomy.

A slightly different version of this myth describes how creation took place when the cosmic egg was created by the vibrations of the Digitaris seed, vibrations that eventually caused the shell to break, thus allowing them to vibrate into the human being. Each of seven vibrations resulted in the legs, arms, head and sexual organs.

The source for the following myth is a 33-day conversation in 1946 between the French ethnologist Marcel Griaule and the blind Dogon priest/hunter/sage, Ogotommeli (Griaule, 16–40). The myth has Deus Faber elements. It also contains an explanation of female circumcision.

***

There was a time when women plucked the stars from the sky and gave them to their children. The children used string to turn them into fiery tops and used them in a game to learn how the world spins. It was the great god Amma—the only god—who made the stars from bits of earth that he threw into space. Amma also used the art of pottery to create the moon and the sun. The sun can be thought of as a pot brought to white heat and glazed with red copper. The moon was not heated as high and white copper surrounds it. Africans were descended from the light of the sun, Europeans from moonlight.

Amma created the world by flinging a lump of clay into space, where it formed a horizontal body with the north at the top, the south at the bottom, and east west arms spreading out from both like a living body. The Earth lay flat on its back and was feminine in nature. At its center were female genitals in the form of an anthill. The clitoris was a termite hill. Amma was lonely without a mate



Cave paintings depicting the myths of the Dogon people, including the creation myth and representations of Amma Serou falling from Heaven. (Werner Forman / Art Resource, NY)

and desired this female being. As he came close to the Earth the termite hill rose up in a manly way and blocked his way into the anthill. Determined to satisfy his strong desire, Amma cut down the termite hill and had intercourse with the Earth.

But because Amma had disturbed the natural order of existence by cutting down the termite hill and forcing himself upon the Earth, the offspring of the union was not the twins he had hoped for but rather, the jackal, forever after the symbol of God's problems with Earth.

Still, Amma had more intercourse with his new wife, filling her with water, the seed of life, and after having developed in the womb of Earth, the longed-for twins were born. From head to loins they were human, and below they were serpents. They had red serpent eyes that were open like human eyes and they had

forked tongues. They had floppy arms and their bodies were covered with tiny green hairs, signifying water and fertility. Called Nummo, these spirit-children of Amma contained his essence, and they went to their father above. He taught them what they needed to know. The twins were perfect containers of the essence of Amma. Born of water, the prime life force of the world, they are to this day in water of all kinds—the ocean as well as the little bits of water humans drink. In creating the Earth itself, Amma needed this water to turn clay into form.

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Some Dogons see creation as a process marked by sacred revelations. The first revelation is nature itself, which speaks through the sounds of the grasses covering the earth. The second is order, symbolized by weaving. Order resulted in humans choosing to live in communities. The third revelation is the granary and the drum. The granary is to the community what the Earth is to the cosmos and the stomach is to the individual. The drum is the people's means of communication. Earth itself was created by the god Amma, who then raped her. Through this act of violent incest came the Nummo twins, who brought harmony to creation by making sense of opposites.

In all of these myths there is a close connection between aspects of the human body and the larger cosmic aspects of the universe. Creation is established both in the myths and in the form of the human body, itself a symbol of the meaningfulness of creation.

See Also: Ancestors in Creation, Animistic Creation, Clay-based Creation, Cosmic Egg in Creation, **Creation from Chaos**, Deus Faber Creation, Etiological Creation Myths, Incest in Creation, Sexual Impulse in Creation, Twins in Creation, **World Parent Creation**.

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DYAK (DAYAK)

Dyak is a collective term referring to the aboriginal non-Muslim people of southern and western Borneo (modern Kalimantan) in Indonesia. There are many Dyak creation myths, often involving sacred animals.

Some Dyak people say that the sun and the moon were created by the Supreme Being out of sacred clay that is found deep in the earth. The people emulate the creator by making sacred vessels out of this clay, vessels that ward off evil spirits. This is an etiological myth that explains why clay pots are made and why the pots themselves are sacred.

A Dyak tribe known as the Iban tell another clay-based myth. In the beginning, they say, only primordial water existed with two spirit-birds floating on it. These birds were Ara and Irik. When two giant eggs appeared, Ara made the

heavens out of one and Irik made the earth out of the other. In order to adjust the size of the earth the two creator gods compressed it, bringing about mountains, valleys, rivers and so forth. The vegetation of all kinds appeared. Finally, the two gods together created humans out of clay and instilled life in them by way of their spirit-cries.

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This myth is animistic in that birds in creation or origin myths are typically spirit figures who give life and significance to all aspects of life, including human beings.

Other Dyaks tell various versions of a different creation myth.

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In the beginning there was a giant serpent, in the mouth of which everything that existed lived when suddenly two mountains emerged into the world: Gold Mountain, the home of the head god of the Lower World, and Jewel Mountain, the home of the Upper World god. When inevitably the two mountains and thus the Upper and Lower Worlds crashed together, the world as we know it began to be formed—sky, rivers, mountains, sun, moon, stars. Also produced were cosmic beasts; a giant hawk of heaven, a giant fish of the waters, Rowang Riwo of the golden saliva, and Didis Mahendera with eyes made of jewels. A goddess, Jata, came later and did more landscaping of the world. And later still came the Tree of Life with golden leaves and fruit of ivory. The Tree brought the Upper and Lower Worlds together.

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In this myth the Tree of Life is an axis mundi.

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The Ngaju Dyak say the world was created by the high god out of the sun and the moon. The god gave people this land as a temporary place to live. The world floated on the primeval waters on the back of, and was surrounded and protected by, the water snake that is synonymous with the Tree of Life.

***

Many of these myths are more origin myths than creation myths *per se*. The Dyaks tend to believe that the universe existed before the events depicted in their myths. In short, there was always a universe; it had no beginning.

See Also: Animals in Creation, Animistic Creation, Axis Mundi in Creation, Clay-based Creation, **Creation from Chaos**, Etiological Creation Myths, Goddess as Creator, Primordial Waters in Creation, Sun in Creation, Two Creators Motif.

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EFE

The Efe people of the Ituri Forest region of what is today the Democratic Republic of the Congo, along with the Aka, Sua, and Mbuti, are collectively known as Bambuti, or in common usage, Pygmies. The Efe, like the others, are patrilineal hunter gatherers. As early as 2250 B.C.E. they were present in the Ituri Forest. Pharaoh

Nefrikare of Egypt knew of them and referred to them as "dancing dwarves" and "people of the trees." The story below is more an origin of death story than a fully developed creation myth.

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With help from the moon, the Supreme Being made a man, Baatsi, out of clay, which he covered with skin and filled with blood. He made a woman, too, and commanded the man to make children with her. "Only be sure to obey one rule," he said. "Do not eat of the Tahu Tree." So it was that Baatsi fathered many children and his children fathered many more children, and everyone obeyed the rule. When they got old and tired they simply went happily to Heaven. Everything went on this way until a pregnant woman with a craving for tahu fruit convinced her husband to break some off for her. Naturally the moon saw the man picking the fruit in the dark and she told her co-creator. Because of what the man and the woman did, we now all suffer the punishment of death.

***

The Tahu Tree aspect of the myth indicates some influence of the Genesis story, probably taught by the colonial missionaries, but the Genesis myth is clearly assimilated into an older story. We note, for instance, that the moon, a female figure, helps the Supreme Being in his creation of humans. We also note the familiar element of creation from clay.

See Also: Adam and Eve, Clay-based Creation, **Creation from Chaos**, Death Origin in Creation.

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EFIK

Inhabitants of the Cross River State of present day Nigeria and parts of Cameroon, the Efik, are a patriarchal trading people led by a still-powerful king. They belong to the larger Ibidio family of peoples.

***

The creator, Abassi, after he had created two humans, feared their ambition. Had it not been for the intercession of Atai, the god's wife, they would not have been allowed to live on Earth. Having given in to his wife, Abassi kept control over the people by insisting that they take all their meals with him. They were forbidden to grow or hunt for food, and they were forbidden to procreate. They had to keep their minds on Abassi. Each day a bell rang to call the human couple up to Abassi's table for meals.

Then the woman began growing food in the earth, and the people liked the food and stopped showing up in Heaven for meals. Soon the man and woman worked the fields together, and before long one thing led to another and there were children. The man tried to hide the children, but Abassi saw the children and he blamed Atai for not recognizing his fears about the humans in the first place. "Look," he said, "they are making their own food and they are procreating, and they have forgotten all about me; see what you have done?"

"Don't worry," said Atai. "I will not let them take more power." She sent down death and discord to keep the people in their place.

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The Efik creation myth, also an origin of death myth, reflects local eating traditions as well as patriarchal control over children, a control undermined by the more realistic approach of women and the natural drives of all people to make their own lives. Like many patriarchal creation myths, it blames women for human troubles.

See Also: Death Origin in Creation, **Ex Nihilo Creation**, Fall from Grace in Creation, Sexual Impulse in Creation, Woman as Source of Evil.

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EGYPTIAN

Ancient Egyptian civilization was arguably the longest lasting and most religiously complex culture in the history of humanity. There is even a prehistoric period about which not much is known. Then, in about 3000 B.C.E., begins the so-called Early Dynastic period, commonly divided into the first and second dynasties, the first beginning with the union of Upper and Lower Egypt under the rule of Memphis, a city in the north, near what is today Cairo. It was during this time that both writing and mythological systems were firmly established. The high god during the first dynasty was Horus in his form as Falcon supporting the sun. In the second dynasty, beginning in about 2850 B.C.E., the union collapsed, and Seth became the high god of the southern region, or Upper Egypt. The Old Kingdom, comprising the third through sixth dynasties, covers the period from about 2780 B.C.E. to about 2250 B.C.E. and was dominated by the northern religious center, Heliopolis, situated near Memphis. This was the period of great pharaonic power, the great pyramids, the greatest Egyptian art, the high god Atum or Ra, and the emergence of the cult of the resurrection god-king Osiris and his wife Isis. It is also the period of the *Pyramid Texts,* the tomb wall decorations and writings from which we get most of our information regarding the early Egyptian creation myths. A time of anarchy followed during the seventh through tenth dynasties, but the period is notable for its literary activity and the so-called Coffin Texts, which also supply information on the cosmogonies. During this time the southern city of Thebes (now Luxor) grew in power. That power was solidified and Upper and Lower Egypt reunified in the Middle Kingdom era, covering dynasties 11 through 13 and the period of the high god Amun or Amun Ra. Amun reigned during an intermediate period of four dynasties leading up to the New Kingdom era, which began in 1580 B.C.E. and was marked at the end of the 18th dynasty by the religious rebellion of the monotheist pharaoh, Amenhotep IV, who renamed himself Akhenaton in honor of his sun god, the Aton (Aten). During the next three dynasties, beginning in about 1320 B.C.E. and including

the rule of Tutankhamen (King Tut), the power of Amun was restored.

Egyptian creation takes many forms, depending on the period and the religious center in question. In prehistoric times it seems clear that a great goddess, sometimes called Nun (the Primordial Waters), reigned supreme and was responsible for creation out of herself. It was said that she gave forth Atum, who then created the universe. There are remnants of this female creative power in such figures as Hathor, Nut (or Neith), and Isis, but by the time of the Pyramid Texts, in which we find the Old Kingdom creation myths, the male force had achieved dominance.

At Heliopolis, Atum took many forms over the centuries, rather like the Indian concept of Brahman. Atum, or Ptah, was the original god; Khepri (spelled in various ways—for example, Khoprer) is Atum made visible, and Ra is god as the sun. Ptah was said to have created the world and the gods as a *deus faber (*god as craftsman or maker*).* The Pyramid Texts tell us that Atum existed alone in the universe and that he created his brother and sister, Shu (air-life) and Tefnut, by masturbating or, as some texts claimed, by expectorating. In some places the original god as Khepri, the morning sun, was said to have created himself by word—by calling out his own name. Shu and Tefnut, in a sacred incestuous act to be repeated for centuries by Egyptian pharaohs (god-kings), produced the god Geb (earth) and the goddess Nut (sky). All of this was watched over by the noninterfering Eye, the original god. Geb and Nut were the parents of Osiris and Isis, Seth and Nephthys, and the older Horus. Osiris and Isis would later produce the boy Horus. From the children of Geb and Nut came all the children of Egypt.



Detail of Pharaoh Akhenaton making an offering to Aten. (© The Art Archive/Corbis)

The best known and most frequently depicted event in the Egyptian creation is the separation of the world parents, Geb and Nut. Nut is typically seen arching as the sky over her prone brother, Geb. As the Earth, he longs for the moist gifts of the sky so he may procreate, and frequently he is shown with an erect phallus. The world parents are separated by their father, Shu (air), presumably signifying the necessity of differentiation and order, rather than total union or nondifferentiation (chaos), for creation.

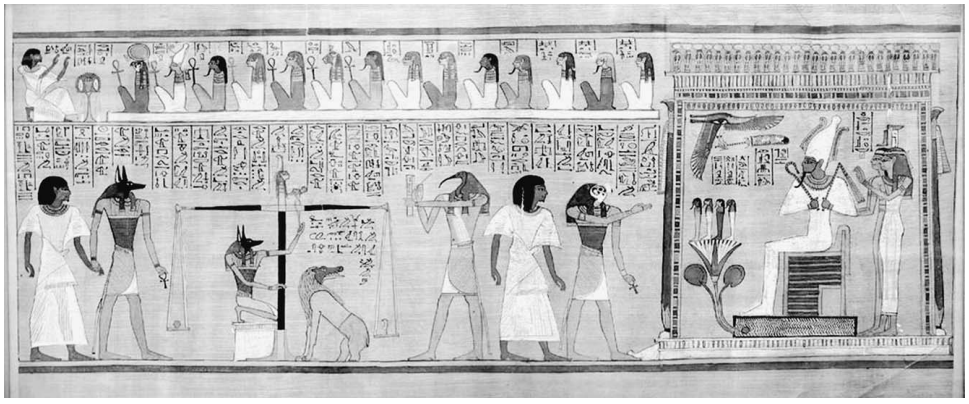
An early version of what became the Geb and Nut story says that when they perceived the old age of Ra and suspected

his weakness, the people began to rebel against him. Not pleased, Ra held a meeting of his Eye, Shu, Tefnut, Geb, Nut, and Nun (the primeval waters) and told them that he had decided to destroy the people for their arrogance. At Nun's suggestion, Ra sent out his Eye to terrorize the people, and they fled into the desert, most to their death. Wishing to retire, Ra and Nun asked Shu to place himself beneath Nut and raise her up. When he did so, she became the great sky cow, and the Earth formed as Geb. A new creation began.

A late third millennium B.C.E. Herakleopolitan flood myth variant of this story tells how when Hathor, as the Eye of Heaven (the sun), had almost destroyed all of Earth, Ra sent her back as Sekhmet the lion goddess to continue the work. But then Ra had second thoughts about completely destroying creation, so he created beer from barley and red ochre and flooded the world with it. Sekhmet, on her way to further slaughter, drank the beer and became drunk—so much so that she forgot about destroying things.

Among the many forms of the Egyptian cosmogonies is the familiar figure of the cosmic egg, a substitute for the primeval waters or the primeval mound. There were people who believed in the cosmic egg as the soul—perhaps the male soul, Atum or Shu—of the original maternal waters (a kind of ancient Animus, to borrow the Jungian term for the opposite sex projection of the energizing soul of the female). One variant of the cosmic egg version teaches that the sun god, as primeval power, emerged from the primeval mound, which itself stood in the chaos of the primeval sea.

A late Egyptian myth of the period of strong Greek influence, says that the creator laughed seven times, and each time he laughed bits of creation came into being. The first laugh produced light; the second turned everything into water, causing the earth to move and to separate the waters into three parts. Now the God of the Abyss appeared. The creator began to laugh a third time when bitterness broke his mood and came into his mind as the god Hermes, who makes the

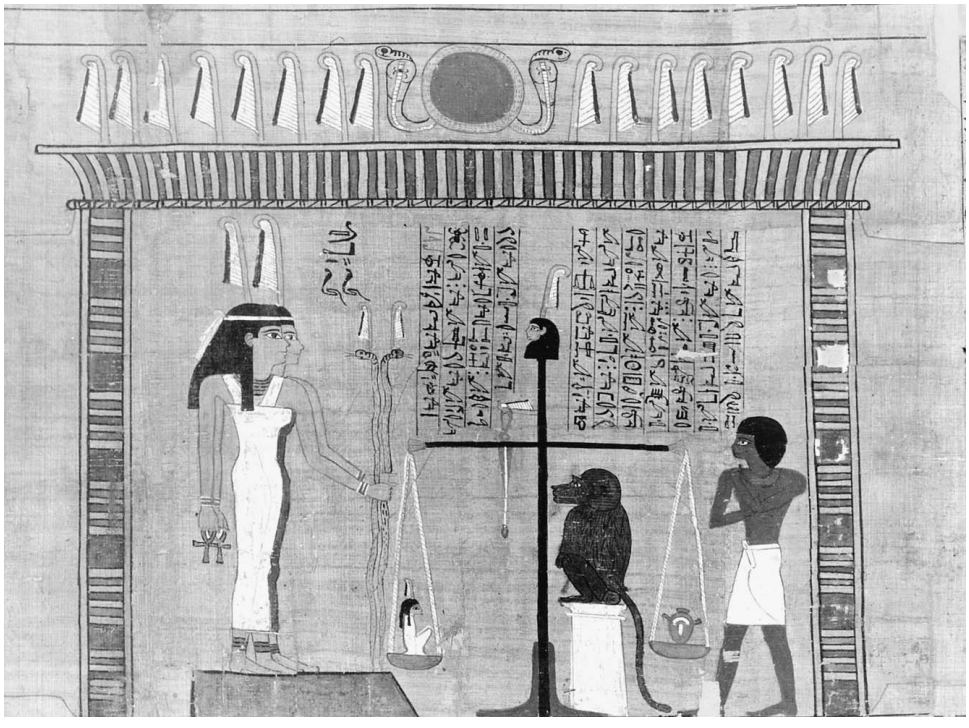


Book of the Dead, Ptolemaic period, Ancient Egypt. (Dreamstime)

world visible. Other laughs led to Fate and Justice and Kronos (Time). The creator's last laugh turned into crying, and the soul came into being.

In spite of a constant development over the centuries, certain aspects of an Egyptian creation myth can be said to be relatively constant. These include a source of all things in the primeval waters, themselves a remnant of the Great Mother, and the presence of an Eye, the sun, that creates cosmos within the chaos of the surrounding waters. The sun, whether Atum, Ra, or Ptah, is also associated with a primeval mound or hill, much like the little fertile mounds left by the receding Nile after the annual floods and perhaps like the early sun coming over the horizon. The mound was symbolized by the great pyramids. The people of Heliopolis said their city was the primal mound; the center of creation. The primal mound is also equivalent to the clump of earth that is brought up from the primordial waters in so many earth-diver creation myths.

See Also: Animals in Creation, Bodily Waste or Fluids as Creation Source, Cosmic Egg in Creation, **Creation from Chaos**, Deus Faber Creation, **Earth-Diver Creation**, **Ex Nihilo Creation**, Fall from Grace in Creation, Flood in Creation Myths, Goddess as Creator, Incest in Creation, Primal Mound, Primordial Waters in Creation, Separation



Ancient Egyptian practice of weighing the heart of the deceased. (© 2009 Jupiterimages Corporation)

of Heaven and Earth in Creation, Sexual Impulse in Creation, Sun in Creation, Word-based Creation, **World Parent Creation**.

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EKOI

The Ekoid-Bantu people, the Ekoi, are a combination of southeastern Nigerian tribes (Ejagham, Boki, Anyang, Keaka, and Yako). They live in close proximity to the Efik people. Under the religious leadership of high priests called Ntoons, the Ekoi are best known for their ritual many-faced skin-covered ritual masks.

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In the beginning there were two gods, Obassi Osaw and Obassi Nsi, who created everything together until Obassi Osaw decided to live in the sky and Obassi Nsi decided to live on the Earth. Obassi Osaw gives light and moisture, but he also brings the pain of draught and storms. Obassi Nsi, however, is a nurturer, and he takes us back into himself when we dies.

One day long ago, the sky god made a man and a woman and placed them on the Earth. They knew nothing about food or drink, so Obassi Nsi taught them about planting and Obassi Osaw sent down water from his great blue cloak. The people learned to grow and eat the fruit of the palm tree and to use it for medicine as well. The gods have treated the people well.

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The Ekoi two creators motif is perhaps expressed in the multi-faced masks for which the Ekoi are famous. But what begins here as an Ex Nihilo and two creators type of myth then becomes a separation of Heaven and Earth myth. Note the closeness in names between the Ekoi and Efik creators.

See Also: **Ex Nihilo Creation**, Separation of Heaven and Earth in Creation, Two Creators Motif.

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Eskimo. *See* Inupiat (Inupiaq)

FANG (FAN)

The Bantu-speaking Fang or Fan inhabit parts of what are now Gabon, Cameroon

and Equatorial Guinea. Their creation myths emphasize the creation of humans, and usually a sense of an element of evil inherent in the world.

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Mebere made the first human out of clay, but in the form of a lizard. He put the lizard in the sea and left him there for eight days, after which he emerged as a man and said, "Thank you."

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A more detailed Ex Nihilo myth emphasizes the fall of humanity.

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In the beginning there was only Nzame (God), made up of three parts: Nzame, Mebere, and Nkwa. The Nzame part created the universe and the earth and breathed life into it. He called Mebere and Nkwa, to see his work. "How do you like it?" he asked. "Do I need to make anything else?" Mebere and Nkwa said that Nzame needed to make a chief for the earth. So Nzame made the elephant, the leopard, and the monkey joint chiefs, but he was dissatisfied. So, Nzame, Mebere, and Nkwa together made a creature that looked like them. The new creature took strength from Nzame, leadership from Mebere, and beauty from Nkwa. The three-part God named the creature Fam (Power), and ordered him to take charge of the world. Then God returned to the place above the world.

For a while things went well enough; the original chiefs—the elephant, the leopard, and the monkey—obeyed Fam. But Fam grew arrogant and proud, and he began to be cruel to the animals, even to the original chiefs. And he decided to stop worshipping Nzambe. "Let Nzame be where he is; I rule here," he sang. When the god heard the song he became angry. "Who is singing this song?" he called out. "Try looking for him," Fam answered rudely. Now enraged, Nzame brought down thunder and lightning and destroyed everything in the world except Fam, who had been promised a life without death, and Nzame is always true to his word. So it is that although he went out of sight, Fam is still around and creates trouble when he wants to.

Looking down at the barren earth, the three-part God decided he had to do something about it. They applied a new layer of soil to it, and when a tree grew he caused it to drop its seeds and made new trees. When leaves fell into water they became fish, and the ones that fell on the earth became animals. Before long our world was as we know it. The old burned earth is still there if we dig deep enough. We call this coal, and it still burns in fires.

Then Nzame decided to make a new Fam, but one who would experience death. This was our ancestor Sekume. Sekume made the first woman, Mbongwe, from a tree. The first ancestors were made with both Body and Soul. Soul gives life to Body and is its shadow. When Body dies, Soul does not die; Soul is the tiny spot in the middle of the eye. This spot is like the star in the heavens or the fire in the hearth.

Sekume and Mbongwe had many offspring. But they were always wary of old Fam who constantly tunneled up from the place underground where Nzambe had placed him and did evil things to them. This is why the people tell their

children to be careful of what they say in case Fam is listening, ready to bring them trouble.

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It is possible that the Trinitarian nature of Nzambe, the creator god, is a reflection of colonial Christian influence. In any case, the Fang creation myth emphasizes the fall of Fam, representing original mankind—the new Fam being Sekume, the ancestor of the present crop of humans. Instead of a flood *per se*, Nzambe destroys the old creation with thunder and lightning. This myth is also an origin myth, explaining the existence of coal and of death. The presence of a spirit world is important here. The world has inherent evil in the buried Fam and potential spiritual power in the existence of Soul.

See Also: Aborted Creation, Ancestors in Creation, Animals in Creation, Clay-based Creation, Death Origin in Creation, Etiological Creation Myths, **Ex Nihilo Creation**, Fall from Grace in Creation, Flood in Creation Myths.

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FIJI ISLANDS

The Fiji Islanders in the Melanesian Islands of the western Pacific were described by Captain James Cook as warriors and cannibals. Later travelers have reported a more benign impression of a diverse population that includes original Fijians and migrants from Melanesia, and Polynesians related to the people of Tonga. In the Fijian creation myth, the creator was a serpent god and who delegated creation itself to an earth-diver.

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In the beginning there was only water and twilight everywhere and the island place of the gods. No one knows which island this is, but it floats around the edge of the world and can sometimes be seen at sunrise. The creator was the serpent god Ndengei. He was the head god of all the original Fijian gods, the ones who were in Fiji before the Polynesians and Europeans—Christians—brought their gods. The people say that when Ndengei sleeps it is night, when he rolls over there is an earthquake, and when he wakes up it is day. Ndengei's son, Rokomautu, did the actual creating of the Fiji Islands; he scooped them up from the bottom of the sea. As for Ndengei, he pretty much stays away, but the people pray to him anyway.

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More often than not, serpents in creation myths are associated with evil. This is clearly not the case with the Fijians. Their creator is a serpent who, nevertheless, like most serpents, tends to remain hidden. Fiji Creation stories are used in curing ceremonies.

See Also: Animals in Creation, Creation Myths as Curing, Deus Otiosus or Absconditus in Creation, **Earth-Diver Creation**, Polynesian.

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FINNISH (FINNO-UGRIC)

The Finns, one group of Uralic, speak the Finno-Ugric language based on an original Uralic language spoken by peoples of the northern Urals for several millennia. Finno-Ugric peoples developed a distinct mythology after they migrated into the area now known as Finland. This myths of the Finns are collected in the national epic of Finland, the *Kalevala*, compiled by the poet Elias Lonnrot in the 19th century. The Finnish creation myth, based on ancient Finno-Ugric traditions, is retold mainly in the first two runes or sacred chants of the epic.

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A statue of Vainamoinen in front of the old house of the students. (© Esa Hiltula / Alamy)

In the beginning there were the primeval waters and Sky. Sky's daughter was Ilmatar, who lived alone and one day drifted down to the waters to rest. There she floated and swam for 700 years, longing for more life. There was a day when, floating on her back with one knee raised out of the water, she noticed a beautiful bird, a teal, fluttering over the seas in search of a resting place to make a nest. Ilmatar, the Mother of the Waters, then raised her knee farther so the teal thought it was a dry island. The bird made a nest there and laid six golden eggs and one iron one. The little teal sat on her nest warming the seven eggs and also heating the knee of Ilmatar. The heat became so great that it began to burn the uplifted knee. Finally, Ilmatar could not stand it and she jerked her knee into the water to cool it. This dislodged the eggs, which fell into the water and were shattered by the wind and waves. Then something full of wonder came to be. From the lower part of one of the eggshells land developed, and from the top was made the sky as we know it. The moon and the stars came from the egg white, and the yolk became the sun.

After several hundred more years of floating and admiring the results of the broken eggs, Ilmatar began acting on her urge to create. Full of the power of life, she only needed to point to create cliffs and inlets. Her footprints became pools for fish. The movement of her arms made beaches. She made everything that was.

One day Vainamoinen was born of Ilmatar. The sea was his father. He swam for years on the sea before landing on a barren island. When he, the first man, stood, he looked into the sky and asked

help of the Great Bear in the stars. Help came in the form of a boy carrying seeds, which he scattered at Vainamoinen's command. The seeds became trees and plants and covered the barren land. One seed became the oak, which after many years became so large it brought darkness to the land.

Vainamoinen prayed to his mother for help, and she sent a little man with a copper ax. The man grew into a giant; with his now huge ax he chopped down the oak, and light was restored to the world.

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Although with its primordial waters and floating maiden, this myth possesses a feeling of the Central Asian earth-diver creations popular in areas not far from the original Uralic homeland, the dominant themes here are creation from chaos from the primal elements and ex nihilo creation by the daughter of the sky, who simply points and elements spring into being, and by her son Vainamoinen, who carries on the creative process. It is the familiar cosmic egg, on the body of the Water Mother, that initiates the process by which all the world is animated. The creation myth also serves as an introduction to Vainamoinen, a major figure in Finnish mythology.

See Also: Animals in Creation, Animistic Creation, Cosmic Egg in Creation, **Creation from Chaos**, **Earth-Diver Creation**, **Ex Nihilo Creation**, Primordial Waters in Creation, Hungarian (Magyar), Lapp (Sami).

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FON

The Fon are a large West African group of peoples living in Benin (Dahomey), southwest Nigeria, and Togo. Their creation myth, which exists in various forms, features a moon goddess.

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It is said that the creator was Mawu, the moon, the mother of all gods and people. It is said as well that Mawu can be two beings, Mawu (moon in the sky) or Mawu-Lisa (moon-sun), who is both male and female. Some say that it was Lisa, divine male power as the sun, who began things, coming down to Earth to create. Others say that an original high deity, since disappeared, named Nana-Baluku, gave birth to Mawu and Lisa. Nobody really knows for sure, but we are told that Mawu lives in the West and Lisa in the East and that when there is an eclipse they are making love.

There are many popular tales of Mawu as Mother-Creator. It is said that she created everything, moving from place to place on the back of or in the mouth of the rainbow serpent Aido Hwedo, the principle of motion that keeps the celestial bodies moving. When everything was done, Mawu asked the serpent to coil himself around the too-heavy and unsteady Earth to keep it stable. Aido Hwedo is still there today, surrounding the earth and holding his own tail in his mouth. Mawu surrounded him with the seas to keep him cool as he supports the

heavy world. When he tries to shift his weight once in a while to get comfortable, there is, of course, an earthquake or a tidal wave. One day, they say, he will swallow his tail and the world will topple and come to an end in the sea.

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The Fon are a patrilineal people whose creation myth is nevertheless dominated by apparently female forces. In all likelihood this arises from the obvious creative power of women as birth-givers. Of interest, too, is the presence of a positive force in the body of a serpent. The myth is technically an ex nihilo creation as Mawu-Lisa were created out of nothing by Nana-Buluku.

See Also: Animals in Creation, **Ex Nihilo Creation**, Goddess as Creator, Sun in Creation.

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FULANI

The Fulani, a nomadic people of West Africa, particularly Mali, are deeply Islamic and any pre-Islamic myths are told as folk legends. This particular chaos-based creation myth would seem in its ending to be influenced perhaps by Christian missionaries.

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People say that world was created from a drop of milk. First there was a huge drop of milk. The god Doondari came out of it and made stone. The stone created iron, the iron made fire, the fire created water, and the water made air. Next, Doondari came down to Earth a second time and made a man. The man, however, was arrogant, so the god created blindness to humble the man. Blindness became proud, so Doondari created sleep to defeat blindness, and when sleep got out of hand Doondari created worry to disturb sleep. When worry became too strong he made death to defeat worry. When death became arrogant, Doondari came down for a third time as Gueno, the holy one, and Gueno overcame death.

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This is a domino myth meant to describe the origin of death and a means of overcoming death through the high god's gift of a redeemer, a theme that suggests Christian influence.

See Also: **Creation from Chaos**, Culture Heroes in Creation, Death Origin in Creation, Imperfect or Accidental Creation.

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GARO (ACHIK)

Longtime inhabitants of the Garo Hills in the Meghalaya section of India and parts of Bangladesh, the Garo or Achik people are traditionally animists who have gradually converted to Christianity. Even as Christians they practice animist ceremonies such as animal sacrifice and prayers to animal spirits. The Garo are

matrilineal. When a woman wishes to marry, she chooses a husband and has her brother kidnap him. Not surprisingly, a central figure in a pre-Christian Garo creation myth is female.

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In the beginning there was only water and darkness. The supreme being, Tatara-Rabuga, decided there should be a world, so he sent the female spirit, Nostu-Nōpantu, to do the creating. To avoid the water, Nostu-Nōpantu used a spider's web as a hammock and tried to create objects using some sand that Tatara-Rabuga had given her. But the sand figures simply fell apart, so the spirit sent a giant crab to the depths of the primordial waters in an attempt to find clay. When the giant crab came back without clay, Nostu sent a tiny crab, who also failed. Finally, it was a beetle, Chiching-Barching, who succeeded in retrieving clay from under the waters. Using this clay, Nostu-Nōpantu fashioned the earth, calling it Mané-Pilté. She created large boulders called Mojar and smaller rocks called Dinjar. But Nostu found that everything was too wet, so Tatara-Rabuga created the sun, the moon, and the wind to dry things up. He also decorated Lady Earth with beautiful clothes and hair—that is, with sky, clouds, and plant life. And then the god created apes, frogs, and other animals for land and water habitats. He also made thunder, rain and rivers.

Tatara then convened a meeting of spirits and announced his intention to create humans. He sent the goddess-spirit Susimé to Earth to prepare things for the humans. Tatara then created the first humans, a man named Sani and a woman named Muni. Muni gave birth to Gancheng and Dujong, who produced Nōrō and Mandé, the first Garo.

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The universal motifs in this earth-diver myth are the original presence of a creator and primordial waters and the sending of animals to the depths to find the essential material of creation. The life-giving waters, the female director of creation, and the arrival of a female spirit who acts as a culture hero to prepare the earth for humans all point to a matrilineal culture. The dressing of the living Earth with living materials is an expression of animism.

See Also: Ancestors in Creation, Animals in Creation, Animistic Creation, Clay-based Creation, Culture Heroes in Creation, **Earth-Diver Creation**, Goddess as Creator, Primordial Waters in Creation.

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Germanic. *See* Norse

GILBERT ISLANDS

The Gilbert Islands are a group of 16 islands known as Micronesia, part of the Republic of Kiribati in the Central Pacific. The Gilbert islanders tell of a supreme being, Nareau, who commanded the sand and water to produce offspring. The myth is a good example of the separation of Heaven and Earth variety and includes the element of the god sacrificed to become the world.

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One child of water and sand was Nareau the Younger, who called on the others to rise up and live. Because Sky was so heavy on Earth, however; they could not get up. Nareau the Younger therefore killed his father, made the sun and moon out of his eyes, and placed his spine on end on Samoa. This became the world tree or axis mundi.

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The people on Naura Island have an Earth-Heaven, primal entity division myth in which we are told of the beginning as a time when there was only the sea, in which the god Areop-Enap lived in a mussel shell. It was dark in there, but the god found a big snail and a little snail living with him, so he made the big one into the sun and the little one into the moon. He got a worm to separate the parts of the shells to become the sky and the earth. The worm's sweat made the sea as we know it.

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The cultural elements of these myths are the elements of the immediate environment: the tree in Samoa, the clam shells. The presence of elements of creation made from the division or sacrifice of primal entities are indicative of an animistic religious tradition.

See Also: Animals in Creation, Animistic Creation, Axis Mundi in Creation, Dismemberment of Primordial Being as Creation, Melanesia, Micronesia, Polynesian, Separation of Heaven and Earth in Creation, **World Parent Creation**.

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GNOSTIC

Gnosticism, or Gnosis, was a form of mysticism that gained great popularity in the Mediterranean world in the centuries immediately following the death of Jesus. It was a movement influenced by duality—the struggle between good and evil—as found in Zoroastrianism, Christianity, Buddhism, and Hinduism. A Gnostic was one who possessed *gnosis*, the special kind of knowledge of the divine that would save the soul from the corruption and illusion of the material world.

The most famous Gnostic was Hermes Trismegistus, who lived in Egypt in the second century C.E. and was sometimes identified with the ancient Egyptian god, Thoth. In his writings we see a clear parallel with much of the Christian creation myth of John with its emphasis on the Word (*Logos*). For Gnostics, Logos sometimes took the form of Sophia, the female embodiment of Divine Wisdom. The visionary aspect of Gnosticism is evident, as well, in the *Book of Revelation*, the last book of the Christian Bible.

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There is an ex nihilo Gnostic myth that tells how Sophia, represented by the Dove, which also represents the Holy Spirit in canonical Christianity, was the child of the primeval Silence, and that Sophia was the mother of both Christ and a female spirit named Achamoth. It was Achamoth who created the material world and also gave birth to Ildabaoth, the Son of Darkness, and to various spirits that were emanations of Jehovah. These spirits in turn produced angels and humans.

Jehovah had forbidden humans to eat of the Tree of Knowledge, but Achamoth took the form of the serpent Ophis and sought Christ's help to convince humans to eat of the tree in order to gain *gnosis*. Later Sophia sent Christ as the Dove to enter the human Jesus as he was being baptized by John the Baptist.

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Forming another ex nihilo myth, Hermes Trismegistus tells how Poimandres, the Shepherd, the Nous (Mind) of the Absolute Power, taught him the nature of reality and God. Poimandres begins by giving Hermes a vision of the sacred flame, the light that is Logos, the Word of Nous (Mind of God). He then reveals that he is the light and that the Word of that light is the Son of God. God, he says, is androgynous, and by taking into itself the Word, became the cosmos. God also brought forth the Demiurge; the god of matter who participated in setting the cosmos in motion.

Then Nous created man in his own image and loved him, but man fell in love with the reflection of Nous in the waters, and he fell into the realm of nature—the lower order of the material world. Thus man became both mortal (of the earth) and immortal (of God), and his life is a constant struggle between the dualities, good and evil, spiritual and material.

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Another Gnostic creation, one of the chaos-based variety, is that of Mani, one of the greatest thinkers of the movement. Mani tells how everything in creation is a struggle between good and evil, light and darkness. First, man was defeated by the powers of Darkness and only partly redeemed by God's messenger, who succeeded in activating creation. Then Darkness created Adam and Eve and taught them to procreate. God followed by sending Jesus to teach man gnosis, the knowledge that can save us. Adam longs for the lost light revealed by Jesus.

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Clearly, the central issue in the Gnostic creation stories and theories is the concept of duality, which owes much to the Zoroastrian tradition and, to a lesser extent, to the Christian tradition. The first myth told here was extreme heresy to the early Christian church.

See Also: Buddhist, Christian, **Creation from Chaos**, Duality in Creation, **Ex Nihilo Creation**, Sexual Impulse in Creation, Sophia, Zoroastrian.

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GOND

The Gond people (Gondi) are one of the largest of the aboriginal, non-Hindu tribal groups of central India. They speak a Dravidian language that associates them with the peoples who lived in India before the arrival in India of the Aryan invaders in the second millennium B.C.E. The Gonds share many myths with other tribal groups in the area and there are many variations of their creation myth. There is also significant Hindu influence

on the myths, which are sung by bards (pardhans) at ceremonies such as the popular Dandari festivals celebrating the marriage of the creator's daughter, Yetwa, to the Gond culture hero, the Raj Gond.

The ultimate creator god in Gond mythology is Bhagavan. The creation myth in which he figures is a variation on the earth-diver motif in which animals perform the necessary rites of pre-creation, as in the case, for instance, in another creation myth of the tribal peoples of India, that of the Garo.

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In the beginning, Bhagavan sat in the primeval waters on a lotus leaf. From a fleck of dirt—that is, from already existing undifferentiated or chaotic matter—on his chest he created a crow and sent him to find the seed of Earth. With the help of a giant crab, the crow found an earthworm, whose belly contained the seed of Earth. The worm agreed to vomit up what was in his stomach and a small ball of earth came up. The ball contained the seed of Earth. The crow took the mud ball to Bhagavan, who dissolved it in water and churned it until the basis of Earth was formed. The creator steadied this layer of earth by nailing it down.

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One Gond myth, essentially a separation of Heaven and Earth myth, tells how Earth and Sky fell in love and the creator agreed to celebrate their wedding.

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All the creatures were invited to the wedding and agreed to come. Only Jackal refused, warning the creator that if Earth and Sky married there would be no room between their coupling bodies for creation to continue. The creator understood and called off the wedding. He arranged instead for Earth to marry Sun.

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A myth that reveals strong Hindu influence on Gond mythology and perhaps the attitudes of the dominant Hindu society towards the minority Gonds, features the creator deity Mahadeo, a version of the Hindu god Shiva, and his wife, Parvati. Because he created agriculture as well as elements of the world, Mahadeo played the role of culture hero as well as creator.

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Mahadeo had decided to prepare the world for the creation of humans. He planted trees and other plants and essentially developed an agricultural system. Before he went off to work one day he reminded his wife not to eat of a certain vegetable, but she did. As a result, women now suffer menstruation and painful childbirth. Parvati became pregnant and gave birth to dark babies (Gonds) and light ones (Hindus). Mahadeo did not like the Gond children and buried them. They were rescued by the Gond culture hero, Lingo (Lingal).

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Another version of the Mahadeo-Parvati myth tells of an original Gond mother goddess who deserted her children.

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The Gond children deserted by their Mother Goddess were adopted by Mahadeo and Parvati—that is, by Hindu

powers. The young Gonds now demanded forbidden meat and alcohol and were imprisoned by Mahadeo until Lingal, a sacred musician, freed them and taught them how to live properly according to clan arrangements and rituals.

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Still another Gond myth tells of a great flood, from which a brother and sister alone were saved. This pair then became the progenitors of the current human race.

Any or all of these myths are sung in various places by the bards. It is impossible to speak of one definitive Gond creation myth as the myths are often intertribal and Hindu-influenced. What can be said is that the myths reveal the Hindu-Gond relationship, expressing a sense of Hindu superiority over or disdain for Gonds.

See Also: Ancestors in Creation, Animals in Creation, Bodily Waste or Fluids as Creation Source, **Creation from Chaos**, Culture Heroes in Creation, **Earth-Diver Creation**, Fall from Grace in Creation, Flood in Creation Myths, Garo (Achik), Incest in Creation, Indian, Primordial Waters in Creation, Separation of Heaven and Earth in Creation.

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GREEK

Of all mythologies that of Greece is one of the most complex and sophisticated. To discuss that mythology, however, is to discuss a process of development that includes several stages, from the Bronze Age and Helladic period to the Archaic and Classical periods. Greek creation myths include an early so-called Pelasgian myth, named after Pelasgus, the first man of that myth, as well as the creation myth told much later by Hesiod and others, and still later the myth of the Orphic tradition.

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The Pelasgian creation story dates from the fourth millennium B.C.E. The Pelasgians arrived in Greece long before the more patriarchal originators of the Olympian religion, and it is clear that Olympian creation myth was influenced by that of the Pelasgians. The Pelasgians were goddess worshippers. Their creation myth is dominated by a female creator and a cosmic egg. In the myth is a female-serpent relationship that can be compared to the Eve-Serpent relationship associated with the Hebrew creation, but the emphasis is on female power rather than weakness.

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In the beginning there was the great goddess Eurynome, who emerged naked from chaos and divided the waters from the sky so she could dance lonely upon the waves. As she danced she created the wind. She caught the north wind and rubbed it, and it became the serpent Ophion. Ophion coupled with the dancing goddess and she was full.

Now, as a dove, Eurynome laid the world egg, and she ordered Ophion to encircle it until it hatched the sun, moon, stars, and Earth with all of its creatures and plants.

The goddess and her companion lived on Olympus until Ophion became

arrogant and had to be banished—his head flattened and his teeth broken—to the darkness under the earth.

Later Eurynome made the Titanesses and Titans to control the planets, and finally she made the first man, Pelasgus.

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The creation referred to by Homer in the *Iliad* (Book 14), written in about the eighth century B.C.E., is really a version of the Pelasgian myth. It says that Oceanus and the Titaness Tethys begat the first gods and formed the original world, and that Tethys ruled the sea and Oceanus surrounded the universe.

It is not until the work of Hesiod, who lived in Boetia in the late eighth century B.C.E., that we find a fully developed Greek creation myth. The story is contained in Hesiod's *Theogony* and his *Works and Days*. Note the presence in this story of the theme of the primordial parents, Earth and Heaven (Sky) and their separation. The myth rings particularly familiar to students of Freud's writings on the primal relationships between son and mother and son and father.

It has been suggested by many scholars that the changing of the guard in Heaven marks historical changes in the development of Greek culture. According to these theories, in ancient times Greece would have been dominated by an earth-based agricultural society that emphasized the great mother goddesses. In time, however, a more warlike patriarchal people invaded the peninsula, bringing with them their thunder-bearing Aryan head god, who became Zeus and put an end once and for all to the ancient struggles between Earth and Heaven; female and male power.

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First there was the void, chaos, out of which sprang Gaia, "wide-bosomed Earth;" a firm foundation for Mount Olympus and the gods who would live there. Then came dark Tartarus (Hades), a place deep in the ground; Eros, which is the love that overpowers all; Erebos, the darkness of Tartarus; and Night itself. Air and Day were born of Night by Erebos.

Gaia (Earth) gave birth by herself to Ouranos, starry Heaven. He was equal to his mother and covered her completely. Of herself Gaia also brought forth the hills, mountains, valleys, and Pontus, the deep barren sea. After that she lay with her husband-son Ouranos and mothered the first gods, the Titans. Some of the best known of these were Oceanus, beautiful Tethys, the one-eyed Cyclopes, three horrid hundred-armed monsters, Hyperion, the earth goddess Rhea, and the terrible Kronos.

From the first, Ouranos and his son Kronos hated each other. In fact, most of the children of Ouranos and Gaia hated their father. As for Ouranos, he hated his children so much that he hid them away in dark places of Earth (Gaia), causing his mate much grief and pain. In anger at Ouranos, she asked her sons for help, accusing Ouranos of shameful acts. Wicked Kronos was quick to agree to destroy his father, and he took the great sickle fashioned by Gaia and waited for his unwary parent. Bringing dark Night with him, Ouranos came in lustful passion to beautiful broad-breasted Gaia. When he had

laid himself down on her, his son Kronos reached between his parents with the cold sickle and harvested his father's parts, flinging them immediately into the wide sea. The drops of blood that fell onto Gaia flowered into the vengeful Furies, the terrible giants, and the graceful Meliaean nymphs. As for the immortal genitals floating on the sea, their seed formed a thick foam around them and out of that foam came the most beautiful of women, who touched first on Cythera and then on the island of Cyprus. This was Aphrodite, goddess of desire, whose follower (and later people said her son) was Eros. Now Night gave birth to Doom, Death, Sleep, and Dreams. It then bore Blame and Distress, the dreaded Fates, Nemesis, Deceit, Friendship, Old Age, and Strife, who herself mothered Work, Hunger, War, and other miseries.

Kronos now was king over Heaven and Earth. He raped his sister Rhea, who gave birth to a family of boundless power and beauty. These were the first six of the family of gods that would later be called the Olympians because they lived on Mount Olympus. Hestia was to be goddess of the hearth, Hades god of the underworld, and Poseidon god of the sea. Demeter would take the place of her grandmother, Gaia, and her mother, Rhea, as goddess of earth in a time when humans and gods thought the activities of the heavens more sacred than those of earth. The fifth child of Kronos and Rhea was beautiful Hera, and great Zeus was the sixth.

Evil Kronos had heard from his mother and his emasculated father that he would be overthrown by one of his own, so as each child was born, he ate it. Rhea was horrified at her husband's deed and managed, with the help of her parents, to give birth to her last child, Zeus, in a hidden place on Crete. On Kronos's plate she substituted a stone for Zeus. The deception was successful. The spared Zeus returned in time and led a war against his father and the Titans, eventually establishing the Olympian hegemony.

Zeus ruled supreme on Olympus and married his sister Hera. As king and queen, they produced the blacksmith god, Hephaistos, and the god of war, Ares. Zeus was not a faithful husband. He had children by other goddesses and by mortal women. Among his most powerful offspring were the great goddess Athena, who some say sprang fully armed from Zeus's head; the messenger god, Hermes; the god of prophecy and light, Apollo; his sister, the huntress Artemis; and the mysterious god who dies and returns to life, the holy Dionysos. In the heyday of the Olympians it was said that Zeus, not the severed genitals of Ouranos, had fathered the beautiful but dangerous Aphrodite and that she, not chaos, gave birth to Eros.

As for the creation of man, there are many Greek tales. Hesiod says that a golden race of humans was created in the time of Kronos's reign. This race was later hidden away in the earth to become beneficent spirits. Then a Silver Age race of somewhat foolish and irreverent humans was created by the Olympians. They angered Zeus and were hidden away in the earth as underworld spirits. Then Zeus made Bronze Age people who were powerful, warlike, and self-destructive. These men were also buried in the earth, in Hades itself. To replace them, Zeus

made a race of heroes, whom we know from the stories of the blind Homer. These heroes passed like the other races before them, but they live forever in a far-off place called the Blessed Isles.

The race that lives here now, says Hesiod, is that of Iron. What a terrible fate it is to be of this race—to toil, suffer, and die.

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One Greek myth—recorded by Apollodorus in his *Library*, concerns the ending of the Bronze Age by a great flood, sent by Zeus to punish the arrogant people. Only Deucalion and his wife Pyrrha survived as Deucalion's father, Prometheus, had advised him to build a chest or ark in which to ride out the deluge. The ark landed on a mountain top—some say Mount Parnassus—when the waters declined, and the saved couple made a sacrifice to Zeus. They were instructed to throw stones onto the ground. Deucalion's stones became the new human males; those of Pyrrha became the new creation's females.

There are people who say the great Titan Prometheus, who sided with Zeus in the War in Heaven and was later betrayed by him, created mankind out of water and clay, and that he also gave humans fire.

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A more philosophical Greek creation was that of the religious system called Orphism, after the mythological poet-musician Orpheus, who lost his love, Eurydice, in the underworld. The Orphics, like the Zoroastrians of Persia (Iran), emphasized questions of duality and the life of the soul. Their creation myth is of the cosmic egg variety. The Orphic cult developed in Greece beginning in the late seventh century B.C.E. Many of the characters in the Orphic myths are taken from the related, mainstream Olympian religion, but Orphism also includes a mystical element, an emphasis on the soul's path to salvation, and such Eastern principles as reincarnation.

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In the beginning was the silver cosmic egg, created by Time. Phanes-Dionysos broke forth from the egg as the firstborn (Protogonos), the androgynous container of all the seeds of life. It was Phanes-Dionysos who created the universe, beginning with a daughter, Nyx (Night), and later the familiar gods, Gaia and Ouranos.

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It was also said that when Zeus came along, he swallowed Phanes-Dionysos and thus, by containing the source of being in his own belly, made the world new.

The Orphics also told of the god Dionysos being eaten by the Titans. When the Titans were destroyed, mankind emerged from their ashes. Mankind therefore contains the evil of the Titans and the goodness of Dionysos. In some Orphic myths the dismembered Dionysos is restored to life by Persephone and/or Demeter.

Orphism stresses the androgynous aspect of the creator, androgyny being the symbol of absolute wholeness and perfection, that state toward which the Orphics strove in order to free themselves from the restrictions of the dualistic, gender-based (and, therefore, fertility-centered, death-defined) life of the body.

In Orphism Dionysos becomes, like Osiris in Egypt before him and Jesus after him, a dying and resurrected god. As, in the myth above, he is also the creator of the universe, he is possibly an influence on the concept of Logos in the Christian creation myth of John I, in which Jesus as the son of God exists from the beginning of time as one with the creator.

See Also: Clay-based Creation, Cosmic Egg in Creation, **Creation from Chaos**, Dismemberment of Primordial Being as Creation, Duality in Creation, **Ex Nihilo Creation**, Flood in Creation Myths, Geb and Nut, Goddess as Creator, Hebrew, Incest in Creation, Sacrifice in Creation, Separation of Heaven and Earth in Creation, Sexual Impulse in Creation, Woman as Source of Evil, **World Parent Creation**.

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GUARANI

The Guarani, originally Aba ("the People"), are a large indigenous South American tribe with settlements in Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, Bolivia, and especially Paraguay, where their language is one of the nation's official languages. Various Guarani groups have distinct creation myths that overlap with others but have elements peculiar to themselves.

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The Guarayu-Guarani people of Bolivia say that in the beginning, after water and bulrushes came about, there was Mbir the worm slithering about in the rushes. Eventually he became a man, and in that shape he created the world as we know it, out of chaos. Mbir was also called Miracucha, and there were two other gods. One was the sun, Zaguagua, who was so brightly decorated that nobody could look at him until he was far down in the sky in the evening. The other god was Abaangui, who, after trying hard to become human, finally succeeded, but with a nose so huge that he cut it off. It flew into the sky and became the moon.

The first Guarayu-Guarani ancestor was Tamoi, or Grandfather. He showed the people how to do all the things they do—planting, gathering, hunting, fishing, and making beer, bows and arrows, and fire. When he had done all this Tamoi went away into the west, leaving his wife and child behind as sacred rocks.

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It could be that Grandfather Tamoi was really Mbir—the creator god who was a worm before he took the form of the first man—because when people die, their souls go west, where Tamoi went. On the way there they always meet a figure

known as "the Grandfather of Worms," who gets huge and blocks the path if the soul has come from a bad person. The people still pray to Tamoi for good things and perform songs and dances for him, so he is probably Mbir after all.

Relatives of the Guarayu-Guaranis, the Apapocuva-Guarani of Brazil, tell a somewhat different story. They say that in the very beginning, in the dark nothingness, bats fought each other without stopping and that Our Father, who was the sun, entered the darkness and created the earth and propped it up on the Eternal Cross. He then made a woman called Our Mother, who produced twins—Our Older Brother and Our Younger Brother—who continued the work of creation.

Our Father also had a son called Tupa (Thunder). Our Father stays far away from the world and leaves the details of creation to his children. Most people think the elder brother is really the sun, who brings heat and growth, while the younger brother is the pretty, useless moon, who in the old days went around making mistakes that Our Elder Brother had to repair. It was Our Elder Brother who gave men fire and taught them the dances. The people fear the return of the ancient bats and think the world is coming to an end anyway

A Paraguayan version of the Guarani creation suggests in an ex nihilo myth that Tupa was the creator and that the goddess Arasy (the Moon) helped him to come down from heaven to land on a hill in Aregua, from which point—now in every sense the World Center—Tupa created everything that is. Among his creations were the first people, the first Guarani, Rupave (Father) and Sypave (Mother). After breathing life into this couple, Tapu left. The first couple produced many children. Their first son was Tume Arandu, in effect the tribe's culture hero and first leader. The second Son, Marangatu, was also a great leader, but a granddaughter, Karena, became the mother of seven monsters, one of which was destroyed through a sacrificial act of one of the first couple's daughters, Porasy. The third son of Rupave and Supave was the trickster and mischief maker, Japensa.

From these myths it is clear that the Guarani believe in a world that from the beginning was an imperfect place of both good and evil. It seems likely that Elder Brother and Tume Arandu are the same person and that Tupa and Mbir are the same. Tamoi and Tume Arandu are also, in terms of their mythological function, the same person.

See Also: Ancestors in Creation, Animals in Creation, **Creation from Chaos**, Culture Heroes in Creation, Deus Otiosus or Absconditus in Creation, **Ex Nihilo Creation**, Imperfect or Accidental Creation, Sun in Creation, Trickster in Creation, Twins in Creation.

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Guinean. *See* Kono

HAIDA

The Haida people of the Queen Charlotte and Prince of Wales Islands in British Columbia and Southern Alaska are a matrilineal people known for their artistic talents, particularly as woodcarvers. Their myths were often borrowed

from neighboring tribes and adapted to their own way of life. They are culturally close to the Tlingit and Tsimshian peoples. Animals play a role in their mythology. Fish and other sea animals are actually deities and spirits in disguise or descendants of deities. Like other northwest coast tribes the Haida tell stories of the creator/trickster, Raven, sometimes known as "Old Man."

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There was a time when only the sea existed and Raven, who was a god then, was flying over it. He spied a tiny island below him and he commanded it to become earth, and it did. When the new earth had grown a lot, Raven cut it up, making Queen Charlotte Island out of a small piece and the rest of the world out of a large one.

On one of his walks around the world he heard a sound coming from a small clamshell and he saw a small face there. After a lot of coaxing, five little faces appeared and then five little bodies. These clamshell-beings were the first people.

Later Raven, in good trickster fashion, stole the sun.

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The tone of Raven's creative acts is comic. There is a sense in the creation myths and other myths that the Haida take their religion somewhat casually, seeing the comic element in life and in themselves. Like us, in spite of his creative powers, Raven could be extremely foolish.

See Also: Animals in Creation, **Creation from Chaos**, Raven in Creation, Tlingit, Trickster in Creation, Tsimshian.



The Raven and the First Men, *Bill Reid. (The Art Archive / Neil Setchfield)*

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Hattian. *See* Anatolian

HAWAIIAN

The indigenous people of Hawaii are part of the large Polynesian group of Oceania that, beginning in about 1200 B.C.E., gradually populated over a thousand islands in the south and central Pacific in the so-called Polynesian Triangle. Other Polynesians include the Maori of New Zealand and the people of Tonga, Easter Island, and Samoa. Polynesians first came to Hawaii between 300 and 700 C.E. Until the 19th century the native Polynesian Hawaiians maintained their own religion and their own culture, which would later be dominated by Christian and European-American ways. The Hawaiian creation chant, a 2,000-line poem called the *Kumulipo*, is a creation from chaos story followed by a world parent aspect. It reflects the fertility and lushness of the islands whose creation it celebrates.



Ki'i image of a male god carved out of wood in the Pu'uhonua O Honaunau National Historical Park. (PhotoDisc, Inc.)

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In the beginning there was only the darkness. Out of the darkness were born the night and the male, Kumulipo, the essence of darkness, and the female Po'ele, darkness itself. These were the parents of the children of the darkness: the shellfish of the depths, the plants that grow out of the dark earth, and grubs of the earth. One birth led to another, and then there were many kinds of animals and plants. The world began to grow lighter, but there were no people yet—only the god Kane-i-ka-wai-ola, who watered the plants in the diminishing darkness.

Eventually there was the male Pouliuli, or deep darkness, and the female Powehiwehi, or darkness with a little light. This couple parented the fish of the sea. The fish swam everywhere and multiplied: shark, mackerel, the hilu fish. At the same time things grew and grew on the land, but it was still dark.

Then Po'el'ele, (dark night—male), was born along with Pohaha, (night coming into dawn—female). These were parents to the insects that fly in the night and to the grasshopper, the caterpillar, and

the fly. An egg was born, too, and out of that came the bird and then many more birds. It was almost dawn, but really it was still dark.

Now Popanopano and Polalowehi were born, male and female, and they gave birth to the animals that came to the land from the sea—the turtles, lobsters, and geckoes. It was not quite light yet.

Po-kanokano and Po-lalo-uli, male and female, were born at this point, and they began to reproduce. Kamapua'a, the pig, was born. He was dark and beautiful, and his people cultivated the flourishing islands. The foot-prints of these ancient ones born at the end of night can be seen still.

Po-hiolo the male and Po-ne'a-aku the female, whose names mean night ending, were born. They produced rat, Pilo'i, also near the end of night. The rat people damaged the land with their scratching and eating.

Now came the birth of the male, Po-ne'e-aku, and the female, Poneiemai, whose names suggest night leaving and night pregnant. They gave birth to dawn, the dog, and the wind, and it was now almost light but still not day.

Po-kinikini and Po-he'enalu gave birth to the time when humans came into the world. Men and women, though different, lived and slept together in deep calmness.

Then finally, dark La'ila'a, the woman, and dark Ki'i, the man, were born. They knew the red-faced god Kane. Now it was daytime and our world.

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This story was once chanted at the births of royal children, signifying a new beginning and the relationship between the child and the plants and animals of the first creation. The myth itself celebrates the islands and everything that grows on them and the relationship between the people and their new environment.

See Also: Animals in Creation, Cosmic Egg in Creation**, Creation from Chaos**, Polynesian, Sexual Impulse in Creation, **World Parent Creation.**

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HEBREW

The late second millennium B.C.E. there was an influx of Semitic people we refer to as Hebrews from Egypt into Canaan, the area we know today as Israel and Palestine. This land was populated by other Semites and by non-Semitic people, the Philistines. As in the case of earlier events such as those surrounding the patriarch Abraham, for instance, what information we have about the exodus of Hebrews from Egypt is deeply imbedded in biblical tradition containing many elements that are clearly mythical rather than historical. Diplomatic letters of the period indicate a concern among Egyptians about the presence of "Habiru" or "apiru" (essentially "foreigners"). It is possible that "Habiru," which seems to have referred to several tribes, including the future Israelite Hebrews, became "Hebrew" and that in the situation surrounding these people we have the basis for the biblical story of the *Exodus*.

Topographical lists of Amenhotep III and Ramses II refer to "the land of nomads [of] Yahveh" to the east of the Delta in Sinai, suggesting that the religion of the early Hebrews in Canaan was probably close in spirit to the beliefs of other small neighboring clan-based tribes such as the Moabites, the Ammonites, Edomites, and Midianites.

What can be said with some assurance is that the early Hebrews in Canaan, whether before or after the migration of the 1200s, would have been a loosely related group of semi-nomadic tribes whose livelihood came from herding and occasional farming. Kinship groups would have been ruled by male heads of family and in some cases would have worshipped family or clan deities. According to Jewish tradition, the clans as a whole traced their ancestry from Abraham to the patriarch Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel, which made the Hebrews the Children of Israel.

It was the struggle for settlement land against the indigenous Canaanites, the smaller immigrant tribes, and especially the Philistines, that led to the cohesion of the Hebrews into a military power. We know that at the end of the 11th century B.C.E. the Hebrew clans united behind a monarchy. The first king of Israel was said to be Saul. Saul was followed by David, of the clan of Judah, in about 1010 B.C.E. David established his capital at the Canaanite (specifically Jebusite) city of Jebus (Jerusalem) and, during a forty-year reign, was greatly responsible for what is known as the golden age of Israel.

At the end of the second millennium, soon after the death of David, Solomon became the priest-king of Israel, and soon after Solomon's death in about 922 B.C.E. a civil war erupted and two states emerged—Israel in the north and Judah, with Jerusalem as its capital, in the south. Meanwhile, the greater empire established by David and Solomon was already in the process of disintegration and was eventually defeated by a Mesopotamian power, the Assyrians.

Later, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon made several forays into Judah, each time setting up puppet regimes and taking away prominent Judeans into exile in Babylon. In this way, like the Assyrians before him, he hoped to prevent future rebellions and the re-establishment of hostile regimes within his empire. During the last attack on Jerusalem in 586 B.C.E. he sacked the city, destroyed the temple, and took away the rebellious puppet-king and still more Judeans.

It was during the Babylonian Exile that the captives from Judah emerged fully as Jews in the religious sense. Unlike earlier Israelite captives of the Assyrians, the Babylonian Hebrews were not forced to become assimilated into the dominant culture, but their mythology was clearly influenced by that culture. With 10th through 8th century Hebrew stories as a foundation, many of the Hebrews in exile developed rules of conduct, prayers, and narratives to support the exclusive Yahweh religion that gave them identity.

The mythology of the *Torah* or "Law," technically the first five books—the *Pentateuch*—of the Hebrew Bible, including the creation story in Genesis, is traditionally attributed to Moses. Given the various versions of particular events and obvious changes in emphasis, style,

and chronology in particular books, however; the actual composition of the *Torah* is now generally traced to several sources. The earliest is referred to as the Yahwist author, or simply J (< the German Jahweh), because of his use of the name Yahweh for the creator god. J apparently wrote in southern Israel (Judah) during the early monarchy, that is, around 950 B.C.E. A rival document by an Elohist writer of E, because of the use of the term Elohim for the high god, was written in northern Israel in about 850 B.C.E., although it clearly makes use of much older oral material. Exilic and post-exilic (587–400 B.C.E.) priestly writers, usually designated as P, assimilated and somewhat altered the earlier sources, and added a great deal of new material.

Genesis is the first book of the five. It contains the creation myth that forms the basis of the Judeo-Christian tradition. Some have seen Genesis as a continuous, uniform story, with Genesis 1:1–2:4a outlining the scheme of the world's origin and Genesis 2:4b–4 carefully painting a more detailed picture of humanity's creation. It appears, however, that the book contains two distinct stories crafted by different hands, each strongly influenced by the historical climate experienced by the authors and reminiscent of other ancient Near Eastern stories of creation.

During the sixth century B.C.E., when the Israelite nation experienced exile in Babylon. a succession of priestly scholars (P) composed a bold, optimistic, logical hymn portraying an almighty, omnipotent, untouchable god, Elohim, who creates a perfect, beautiful, good world populated by creatures made in the likeness of and blessed by God. This is an origin story created for the benefit of a lost nation in the need of encouragement and affirmation, a prelude to the continuing story of a blessed nation. Thus we have Genesis 1:1–2:4a.

> In the beginning God made Heaven and Earth.
> All was empty, chaotic and dark.
> And God's spirit moved over the watery deep.
> God said, Let light shine and it did.
> And God observed the light, and observed that it was good:
> and God separated the light from the dark . . .

Rather than the high-paced, capricious, ritualistic, magic-filled drama depicted in the Babylonian *Enuma Elish* and other Near Eastern creation myths, the reader of Genesis 1 is presented with a structured, majestic, logical, somewhat demythologized prehistory. Within the overall seven-day schedule of creation that P describes—a structure that establishes this as a historical text, a precursor to a continuing forward movement of history—another structure emerges in the form of a series of phrases that are repeated before, during, and after acts of creation: "Let there be . . . ," "God said," "And it was so," "God called," "God saw that it was good," "And there was evening and there was morning. . . ." This is a god in total command, creating from thought and ex nihilo. In an almost pedantic style, P describes God's creation moving from general terms to specific. The first days comprise a series of separations. Light is

created to counter darkness. Time begins. The sky is separated from the earth, and vegetation is separated from the sea.

On the fourth day the sun and moon are formed to separate the days and nights, creating a calendar. Time is running. On the fifth day living creatures are brought to life on land and in the seas. The culmination of creation is reached when God creates male and female on the sixth day. God blesses them and bids them, "Be fruitful and multiply. . . ." This is a blessing we hear again and again throughout the first five books of the Hebrew Bible. History begins. The seventh day of rest establishes God's ultimate command and power. There is nothing more to be done, to control, or to create because it is all good—creation is perfect in this story.

Unlike the *Enuma Elish*, this is not a political or cultic treatise. It is a historical text. There are no rituals mentioned. Not even the Sabbath is implied in the seventh day of rest. That comes later in the Bible, but, as the *Enuma Elish* adulates Marduk, Genesis 1:1–2:4a acts as a kind of propaganda for an almighty god, with P's propaganda intentionally countering the polytheistic beliefs of Babylon. Genesis reinforces belief in one all-powerful god. Unlike Marduk of the *Enuma Elish*, Elohim has ultimate control over the creative process. He is a supreme sovereign without threat of overthrow. Once Elohim creates, it is done, with no chance of change. Marduk is created within the changing cosmos, and one senses that the hierarchy of the Babylonian pantheon could easily shift. Elohim, on the other hand, exists outside of nature. In this creation story he presupposes creation. God is shrouded in mystery. Genesis does not explain where Elohim originates or even the details of how creation occurs. Creation is simply how God commands.

While Genesis 1 reads as a stately, repetitive hymn, there are verses within the text that do not quite fit the style, in that they are highly lyrical and almost illogical. Ch. 1:2 reads, "The earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the waters." The passage leads one to believe that something exists before God begins to create—a sort of primeval darkness perhaps. In Hebrew the word is Tehom, which is etymologically related to the name Tiamat, the Babylonian primordial sea and goddess of the *Enuma Elish*. Marduk must conquer and literally carve up the body of Tiamat in order to create the world. While Elohim does not have a physical battle, in this passage, God does create light in order to conquer the chaotic darkness, that darkness "without form and void." Myth creeps into P's precise text, acting as a reminder of outside textual influences and as an indirect acknowledgment of the existence of the mysterious darkness and chaos in an otherwise perfect creation.

While the story of Genesis 1 could be considered a demythologized myth, it is hard to ignore the influences of other myths upon it. One could at least say this story was written in reaction to creation myths of nearby cultures; for instance, Genesis includes mention of great sea monsters who are reduced in status to ordinary living creatures, a theme that hearkens back to Tiamat, who is often referred to as a monster and primordial sea. In other Near Eastern mythologies, the sun and moon are gods who have names and rule. P tells of their creation

on the fourth day as simply luminaries without name or function except to keep time. Verses 26 and 27 describe God as making man in "our image . . . in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." The plural reference to God, according to some, possibly suggests the presence of a divine council of some sort that hearkens back to a polytheistic conception of the cosmos. Unlike the *Enuma Elish*, in which humans are created to serve the gods, humans in Genesis are made masters who have dominion over creation. While in the *Enuma Elish* the earth and its inhabitants are created almost haphazardly, as needed, Elohim creates with an unalterable plan in mind.

During approximately the 10th century B.C.E., Israel was a strong nation, a people with visions of divine power. During the reign of Solomon or shortly thereafter, there developed an earlier account of creation than the one developed by P, written by a poet-storyteller (J) who speaks of a not-so-perfect creation, one in which humans are made from dust. The creator is an anthropomorphized god who provides temptations and inflicts punishment on those with visions of grandeur—those who might challenge his power. While P describes the sweeping creation of our world, J speaks of a series of damaged relationships between people and the environment, between man and woman, and most importantly, between humanity and God.

Although J's Genesis (2–4) describes a fantastical drama complete with a tree of life, a tree of knowledge, a talking serpent, a blissful lack of shame between man and woman, a paradisiacal garden, and a supreme sovereign who walks among the trees speaking with the creatures he has formed from the dust, the story is more real to the audience than the mysterious, inaccessible, logical, demythologized report of Genesis 1–2:4.

The story told by J, poet and theologian rather than priest, provides a setting, the Garden of Eden—a place certainly well outside human experience. Nevertheless J describes a drama that presents issues ubiquitous to human experience: temptation, choice and the consequences of choice, relationships, compliance, tension, blame, and punishment. Genesis 2–4 is a human interest story, while Genesis 1 is a piece of royal propaganda.

Unlike Genesis 1, which describes a watery chaos and the submission of chaos to order, thus resembling Babylonian creation myths, Genesis 2 describes the beginning as a piece of barren earth that bears life only when a mist comes to water the earth, thus displaying a Canaanite influence. In Babylonia, floods were a yearly threat, but to the desert-dwelling, nomadic Canaanites, water was always welcome and meant new life. In this light the Garden of Eden becomes an interesting image. It is an appropriate metaphor, located at the center of four rivers, umbilical cords of life in a Canaanite tradition. It is humanity's womb, a place without outside threat where one can never return, the birthplace of humanity's relationship with God. Like Genesis 1, Genesis 2 is a prehistory. While P stresses the inaccessibility of God and the clear separation between God and His creations, J attempts to show the Lord God (Yahweh) as something of an experimenter. In a very small sense, J's

God reminds one of Marduk in that He creates as He sees need—for instance the animals and then woman.

As in the *Enuma Elish*, humans in Genesis are created from clay, and man works for God. He tends the garden and names the plants and animals, but unlike in the *Enuma Elish*, God creates a paradise specifically for man, has a relationship with him, and treats him as a kind of god. Adam, it should be noted, is not a proper name at this point. It simply means humanity and is also a possible play on the Hebrew word for earth, which is *Adamah.* Adam's mate is named Eve, which means life. These names are appropriate, and in using them J stresses the importance of the environment, Earth, and humanity's relationship to it.

It has often been assumed that the creation of woman from the rib of man in J's text makes her the inferior of the pair. If one reads the text, however, God admits that man is not complete and needs a fit helper. He tries to find this helper by creating animals. This experiment allows J to indicate his conception of the proper relationship between nature and humans: we should be close but not companions. It is not until God creates a woman that humanity is complete. Man cries out in fact that woman is flesh of his flesh. J adds that "they become one flesh." At last creation is complete and seemingly perfect up to this point.

There is a text in the apocryphal tradition that mentions another first woman, Lilith. Lilith apparently wanted to be sexually dominant. The patriarchy did not consider this a proper version of the story; Lilith retreated into obscurity, and Eve became Adam's companion or helpmate. Perhaps a remnant of Lilith remains in Eve; however; she is the first to try the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge. This act has often been interpreted as an indication of the weakness of an inferior sex. One might also see it as the act of a more independent human. It seems that neither interpretation is necessarily the right one, since up to this point Adam and Eve have been portrayed as equal partners, as literally "humanity" and "life." Why would J upset this balance? This story is not really about male and female roles. The serpent in this myth represents temptation rather than evil. In the ancient Near East the serpent had an ambiguous role. The snake merely helps Eve come to her own decision, urges her to do something she already has in mind. There is temptation because God gives us choices from the beginning. Adam and Eve choose not to obey God's commandment. The story of Genesis 3 is one about disobeying a commandment rather than about the knowledge of good and evil. J presents issues to his readers that are pertinent. Obedience and choice are issues with which we still contend. J focuses on neither good nor evil in connection with the eating of the fruit, but rather the shame and fear. Adam tells God that he heard his (God's) voice and was afraid—because he was naked. Tension between man and woman begins here. Adam blames Eve for offering him the forbidden fruit. Sexual impulse and shame develop. Tensions between man and nature also begin. Eve blames the serpent, and Eve's children and the snake's children are forever enemies. Ultimately man is expelled from the paradise and forced to work the land

to survive. Adam and Eve both disobey God's commandment. God gives Adam and Eve the choice to decide what kind of relationship they will have with him. People often interpret this commandment not to eat the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge as an act of a cruel God who gives humans a test he knows they will fail, or as a way of withholding information of good and evil—information that could potentially threaten God's power. It makes more sense to interpret the commandment as God giving people freedom to choose. If he had not given that choice, the human relationship with him would always have been one of absolute dependence.

It is interesting that God's prohibition is against eating. This is seemingly trivial, but eating meals and prohibitions against certain foods are part of great commandments later in the Bible.

The punishment for Adam and Eve's choice is death, not literal perhaps—they continue to live for 900 years or so—but figuratively. They are no longer immortal and have destroyed a paradisiacal relationship with God. They are thrown out of the Garden of Eden and must struggle to survive and learn what pain means. J presents life as we know it—one of choices and hardship.

There are further references to creation in the Bible that should be mentioned. In Psalms 33:6–15, we are told that the heavens were created "by the Word of the Lord" and "the breath of His mouth." Furthermore, "He gathereth the waters of the sea together as an heap." Psalm 104, too, reveals God as an active creator "who laid the foundations of the earth." In the book of Job, God reveals His role in creation with great clarity: "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?" God asks Job in Chapter 38.

In Chapter 8 of the book of Proverbs we find the female figure, Wisdom, who is said to have been a partner with Yahweh in the creation. (Wisdom in Greek is Sophia, but in Christian theology, Sophia was gradually supplanted as the mediator between the creator and his world by the male Logos, the Word). In Proverbs Wisdom says, "I was created by the Lord before he made anything else, before he made the earth." Wisdom reveals that during the creation she was at the Lord's side, "his darling and his delight . . . while my delight was in mankind."

Like many creation stories, Genesis contains a flood narrative, the familiar story of Noah, who, with his family and representative animals, were spared in the ark until the flood subsided and God made a new covenant with a new creation that would spring from the survivors of the old sinful creation. The biblical flood story is clearly profoundly influenced by the Mesopotamian story of the flood contained in the Sumerian/Babylonian epic of Gilgamesh.

See Also: Adam and Eve, Ancestors in Creation, Animals in Creation, Christian, Clay-based Creation, Death Origin in Creation, Deus Faber Creation, Devil in Creation, Duality in Creation, **Ex Nihilo Creation**, Fall from Grace in Creation, Flood in Creation Myths, Separation of Heaven and Earth in Creation, Sexual Impulse in Creation, Talmudic, Thought-based Creation, Trickster in Creation, Woman as Source of Evil, Word-based Creation.

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Hindu. *See* Indian

Hittite. *See* Anatolian

HOPI

The Hopi live on several mesas that rise above the surrounding Navajo reservation in northern Arizona. Theirs is a society best known for elaborate dance ceremonies involving mysterious spirit figures known as kachina.

One version of the Hopi creation says that in the beginning were Spider Woman (the earth goddess) and Tawa (the sun god). Tawa controlled Heaven and its mysteries; Spider Woman's precinct was Earth. The two lived in Spider Woman's lair, Under-the-World. They were all-in-all in those days but were not husband and wife.

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Longing for company, Tawa divided himself into Tawa and Muiyinwuh, the god of life energy. Spider Woman divided into Spider Woman and Huzruiwuhti, goddess of life forms. Huzruiwuhti and Tawa became a couple, and from their union came the Holy Twins, the Four Corners, the Up and the Down, and the Great Serpent.

Spider Woman and Tawa had the Sacred Thought, which was of placing the world between the Up and Down within the Four Corners in the void that was the Eternal Waters. The Thought became the first song: "Father of all, Life and Light I am," sang Tawa. "Mother of all, receiver of Light and weaver of Life I am," sang Spider Woman.

"My Thought is of creatures that fly in the Up and run in the Down and swim in the Eternal Waters," sang the god.

"May the Thought live," intoned Spider Woman, and she formed it of clay.

Together the first gods placed a sacred blanket over the new beings and chanted the song of life. The beings stirred into Life.

The first gods were not yet pleased, however, so Tawa thought of beings like Spider Woman and himself, who could rule over the world between the Up and Down within the Four Corners, and Spider Woman formed the new thought into man and woman, whom she cradled in her arms until they breathed life.

Instructed to multiply, the man, woman, and other creatures did so, and when there were enough, Spider Woman led them through the four worlds of Under-the-World to the spider hole or *sipapu* that led to the world between Up and Down within the Four Corners, where Tawa sent his all-seeing warmth and light as he made a daily journey overhead.

Spider Woman then made clans, established villages, and instructed the people on how to keep life and form. The men must hunt, she said, and grow the corn. The women must build and keep the houses and lead the families. The men must build underground places—kivas—where clans would meet and send messages to the Gods and from which the people could emerge for new beginnings after hearing the myth of their original emergence into the world. She told the people how to call the Great Serpent, who would strike the earth and give rain to make the crops grow. Before descending back to Under-the-World, Spider Woman called all the clans together. "Do as I have taught," she said, "and you will prosper. Be sure that Tawa and I will always watch over you."



Hopi Katchina doll of the Corn Mother.
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In some Hopi myths it is Tawa or Taiowa who is the original creator. But most often it is Hard Beings Woman, Huruing Wuhti, who at the beginning was the only hard surface—the nucleus of the world to come. Sun existed too. He came from the east each night to Hard Beings' kiva in the west, and she let him in so he could take the trap door to the underworld to find his way back east. Huruing Wuhti also created Muingwu, the young crop god.

The following story exemplifies a Hopi emergence myth as told to missionary and ethnographer Henrich (Henry) Voth in 1905.

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A very long time ago there was nothing but water. In the east Hurúing Wuhti, the deity of all hard substances, lived in the ocean. Her house was a kiva like the kivas of the Hopi of to-day. To the ladder leading into the kiva were usually tied a skin of gray fox and one of a yellow fox. Another Hurúing Wuhti lived in the ocean in the west in a similar kiva, but to her ladder was attached a turtle-shell rattle. The Sun also existed at that time. Shortly before rising in the east the Sun would dress up in the skin of the gray fox, whereupon it would begin to dawn—the so-called white dawn of the Hopi. After a little while the Sun would lay off the gray skin and put on the yellow fox skin, whereupon the bright dawn of the morning—the so-called yellow dawn of the Hopi—would appear. The

Sun would then rise, that is, emerge from an opening in the north end of the kiva in which Hurúing Wuhti lived. When arriving in the west again, the sun would first announce his arrival by fastening the rattle on the point of the ladder beam, whereupon he would enter the kiva, pass through an opening in the north end of the kiva, and continue his course eastward under the water and so on.

By and by these two deities caused some dry land to appear in the midst of the water, the waters receding eastward and westward. The Sun passing over this dry land constantly took notice of the fact that no living being of any kind could be seen anywhere, and mentioned this fact to the two deities. So one time the Hurúing Wuhti of the west sent word through the Sun to the Hurúing Wuhti in the east to come over to her as she wanted to talk over this matter. The Hurúing Wuhti of the east complied with this request and proceeded to the west over a rainbow. After consulting each other on this point the two concluded that they would create a little bird; so the deity of the east made a wren of clay, and covered it up with a piece of native cloth (möchápu). Hereupon they sang a song over it, and after a little while the little bird showed signs of life. Uncovering it, a live bird came forth, saying: "uma hínok pas nui kita náwakna?" (why do you want me so quickly). "Yes," they said, "we want you to fly all over this dry place and see whether you can find anything living." They thought that as the Sun always passed over the middle of the earth, he might have failed to notice any living beings that might exist in the north or the south. So the little Wren flew all over the earth, but upon its return reported that no living being existed anywhere. Tradition says, however, that by this time Spider Woman (Kóhkang Wuhti), lived somewhere in the south-west at the edge of the water, also in a kiva, but this the little bird had failed to notice. Hereupon the deity of the west proceeded to make very many birds of different kinds and form, placing them again under the same cover under which the Wren had been brought to life. They again sang a song over them. Presently the birds began to move under the cover. The goddess removed the cover and found under it all kinds of birds and fowls. "Why do you want us so quickly?" the latter asked. "Yes, we want you to inhabit this world." Hereupon the two deities taught every kind of bird the sound that it should make, and then the birds scattered out in all directions.

Hereupon the Hurúing Wuhti of the west made of clay all different kinds of animals, and they were brought to life in the same manner as the birds. They also asked the same question: "Why do you want us so quickly?" "We want you to inhabit this earth," was the reply given them, whereupon they were taught by their creators their different sounds or languages, after which they proceeded forth to inhabit the different parts of the earth. They now concluded that they would create man. The deity of the east made of clay first a woman and then a man, who were brought to life in exactly the same manner as the birds and animals before them. They asked the same question, and were told that they should live upon this earth and should understand everything. Hereupon the Hurúing Wuhti of the east made two tablets of some hard substance, whether stone or clay tradition

does not say, and drew upon them with the wooden stick certain characters, handing these tablets to the newly created man and woman, who looked at them, but did not know what they meant. So the deity of the east rubbed with the palms of her hands, first the palms of the woman and then the palms of the man, by which they were enlightened so that they understood the writing on the tablets. Hereupon the deities taught these two a language. After they had taught them the language, the goddess of the east took them out of the kiva and led them over a rainbow, to her home in the east. Here they stayed four days, after which Hurúing Wuhti told them to go now and select for themselves a place and live there. The two proceeded forth saying that they would travel around a while and wherever they would find a good field they would remain. Finding a nice place at last, they built a small, simple house, similar to the old houses of the Hopi. Soon the Hurúing Wuhti of the west began to think of the matter again, and said to herself: "This is not the way yet that it should be. We are not yet done," and communicated her thoughts to the Hurúing Wuhti of the east. By this time Spider Woman had heard about all this matter and she concluded to anticipate the others and also create some beings. So she also made a man and woman of clay, covered them up, sang over them, and brought to life her handiwork. But these two proved to be Spaniards. She taught them the Spanish language, also giving them similar tablets and imparting knowledge to them by rubbing their hands in the same manner as the woman of the East had done with the "White Men." Hereupon she created two burros, which she gave to the Spanish man and woman. The latter settled down close by. After this, Spider Woman continued to create people in the same manner as she had created the Spaniards, always a man and a woman, giving a different language to each pair. But all at once she found that she had forgotten to create a woman for a certain man, and that is the reason why now there are always some single men.

She continued the creating of people in the same manner, giving new languages as the pairs formed. All at once she found that she had failed to create a man for a certain woman, in other words, it was found that there was one more woman than there were men. "Oh my!" she said, "How is this?" and then addressing the single woman she said: "There is a single man somewhere, who went away from here. You try to find him and if he accepts you, you live with him. If not, both of you will have to remain single. You do the best you can about that." The two finally found each other, and the woman said, "Where shall we live?" The man answered: "Why here, anywhere. We shall remain together." So he went to work and built a house for them in which they lived. But it did not take very long before they commenced to quarrel with each other. "I want to live here alone," the woman said. "I can prepare food for myself." "Yes, but who will get the wood for you? Who will work the fields?" the man said. "We had better remain together." They made up with each other, but peace did not last. They soon quarreled again, separated for a while, came together again, separated again, and so on. Had these people not lived in

that way, all the other Hopi would now live in peace, but others learned it from them, and that is the reason why there are so many contentions between the men and their wives. These were the kind of people that Spider Woman had created.

The Hurúing Wuhti of the west heard about this and commenced to meditate upon it. Soon she called the goddess from the east to come over again, which the latter did. "I do not want to live here alone," the deity of the west said, "I also want some good people to live here." So she also created a number of other people, but always a man and a wife. They were created in the same manner as the deity of the east had created hers. They lived in the west. Only wherever the people that Spider Woman had created came in contact with these good people there was trouble. The people at that time led a nomadic life, living mostly on game. Wherever they found rabbits or antelope or deer they would kill the game and eat it. This led to a good many contentions among the people. Finally the Woman of the west said to her people: "You remain here; I am going to live, after this, in the midst of the ocean in the west. When you want anything from me, you pray to me there." Her people regretted this very much, but she left them. The Hurúing Wuhti of the east did exactly the same thing, and that is the reason why at the present day the places where these two live are never seen.

Those Hopi who now want something from them deposit their prayer offerings in the village. When they say their wishes and prayers they think of those two who live in the far distance, but of whom the Hopi believe that they still remember them.

The Spanish were angry at Hurúing Wuhti and two of them took their guns and proceeded to the abiding place of the deity. The Spaniards are very skillful and they found a way to get there. When they arrived at the house of Hurúing Wuhti, the latter at once surmised what their intentions were. "You have come to kill me," she said; "don't do that; lay down your weapons and I shall show you something; I am not going to hurt you." They laid down their arms, whereupon she went to the rear end of the kiva and brought out a white lump like a stone and laid it before the two men, asking them to lift it up. One tried it, but could not lift it up, and what was worse, his hands adhered to the stone. The other man tried to assist him, but his hands also adhered to the stone, and thus they were both prisoners. Hereupon Hurúing Wuhti took the two guns and said: "These do not amount to anything," and then rubbed them between her hands to powder. She then said to them: "You people ought to live in peace with one another. You people of Spider Woman know many things, and the people whom we have made also know many, but different, things. You ought not to quarrel about these things, but learn from one another; if one has or knows a good thing he should exchange it with others for other good things that they know and have. If you will agree to this I shall release you. They said they did, and that they would no more try to kill the deity. Then the latter went to the rear end of the kiva where she disappeared through an opening in the floor, from where she exerted a secret influence upon the stone and thus released the two men. They departed, but

Hurúing Wuhti did not fully trust them, thinking that they would return, but they never did. (Reprinted from H. R. Voth, The Traditions of the Hopi, Anthropological Series, vol. 8, Chicago: Field Columbian Museum, 1905, 1–16.)

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As is appropriate for a society that is to this day matrilineal (that is, a person belongs primarily to the mother's family and property is passed down from the mother), the Hopi creation myth is dominated by the female creative principle, Hard Beings Woman (Hurúing Wuhti) or sometimes Spider Woman or both. Like the female element in other creation myths, this woman is associated with the Earth Mother, and, not surprisingly, the creation is of the emergence type. The male principle, Tawa, is the divine creative energy represented by the sun. Familiar motifs in the Hopi myth include the division of the divine parents into new forms, creation by thought, and the idea of creation by song, which perhaps has its source in the ceremonies the Hopis learned from their ancient ancestors, the Anasazi.

See Also: Acoma (Aa'ku), Animals in Creation, Clay-based Creation, Culture Heroes in Creation, Earth Mother, **Emergence Creation**, Goddess as Creator, Sexual Impulse in Creation, Spider Woman, Sun in Creation, Thought-based Creation, Twins in Creation, Word-Based Creation,

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HOTTENTOT

The Hottentots, originally from the Cape of Good Hope, now live mostly in Namibia. Their language, including the "click" sound, and their religion resemble those of the Bushmen. This creation myth contains aspects of the world parent creation myth.

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The Hottentot people come from Tsui-[click]-Goab, which once fought a long and difficult battle against a negative force, [click]-Gaunab. As the evil one was dying he wounded the good one's knee, leading to the name Tsui-[click]-Goab, which means sore knee. The lame god is the provider of all good things: rain, crops, animals. His home is in Heaven. The Evil One lives in another, dark heaven.

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It is clear from this myth fragment that the Hottentot view creation as essentially a struggle between negative and positive forces, both of which influence life in this world.

See Also: Bushmen, Duality in Creation, **World Parent Creation**.

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HUNGARIAN (MAGYAR)

Hungarians are generally believed to be related to the Finno Ugric people, whose origins are in Asia. Until relatively recently the Hungarians were believed to be directly related to the Huns. Thus, the first written version of a Hungarian creation myth in the *Saga and Legend of the Stag* is contained in a 1282 C.E. work by Master Simon de Keza, with the title *Gesta Hunnorum et Hungarorum* (Deeds of the Huns and Hungarians). Versions of the stag legend appear in many cultures around the world, including, for instance, those of Japan, Iran, Finland, and Greece. Presumably, the Hungarian version existed in oral folklore long before it was written down. The earth-diver creation story below is based on an excerpt from the legend, compiled by Hungarian ethnographer and linguist Adorjan Magyar.

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Before the earth was formed and there were only the eternal heights and the sea, the ancient god of the sky sat on his throne of gold in the heavens. Near him sat the Great Mother, the material of all things that were and were to be made. Both wore cloaks that contained the planets and stars. With these first gods was their son, the beautiful sun god Magyar. It was he who asked his father when humans would be created.

The eternal one answered, suggesting that humans be created in a new place as sons of the sun god. Then the sky god gave his son instructions. Sleeping eye seeds and sleeping Magya seeds (Magya > Magyar = man) lay below the waters of the primeval sea and must be brought out of the depths to become the basis for creation.

So it was that the sun god turned himself into a golden duck, flew down from the heights of Heaven to the sea and dove several times to the bottom of the sea. After several attempts the golden duck retrieved some of the seeds in his beak and rose to the surface. These seeds awakened to become animals and the people—the Magyars (Hungarians).

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More specifically ethnic than many of the world's earth-diver creations, this myth emphasizes the special role of the Magyar as, in effect, the first people of creation and as children of the sun. As Ajorjan Magyar reminds us, in a similar Finnish version of the myth the duck lays eggs in the lap of the sea god's daughter, who is herself sleeping on the surface of the waters. These eggs hatch the earth and the celestial bodies. It would seem that in the Finnish version a cosmic egg aspect is present, an aspect only suggested by the seeds of the Hungarian version.

See Also: Animals in Creation, Cosmic Egg in Creation, **Earth-Diver Creation**, Finnish (Finno-Ugric), Lapp (Sami), Primordial Waters in Creation, Sun in Creation, **World Parent Creation**.

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HURON

The Huron people have a long history of oppression. Facing many defeats over the centuries, they have migrated from place to place—from Ontario to New York, Ohio, Kansas, and Oklahoma. Their great enemies were the Iroquois. The Huron, sometimes spoken of synonymously with the Wyandot, are known for their deep spirituality, especially in connection with the "Feast of the Dead." That feast occurs every 10 years and involves digging up the dead of the past decade and reburying them in a communal grave so that their spirits can go free. Familiar figures in the Huron creation myth, which is of the earth-diver variety, are the woman from the sky and the twins.

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In the beginning there was water and water animals. Into this emptiness a goddess who had lived with the Great Spirit fell out of the sky. Two loons saw her falling, and they made themselves into a cushion for her to land on. The loons cried out for help from the other animals; the loon still has a loud voice. It was Giant Tortoise who came first and offered to carry Sky Woman on his back. Then he called a council to see what could be done. It was decided that Sky Woman must have some permanent place to live, so Tortoise ordered the animals to dive into the water to find earth. Many died in their attempt. Only the toad made it and returned with a pinch of earth. Sky Woman took it, placed it on Tortoise's back, and it grew into land. The Great Tortoise still supports the world.

Sky Woman had been pregnant when she fell. She was carrying twin boys—one good, one bad. They fought within her womb. The bad one refused to be born properly and killed his mother by breaking through her side. From the buried goddess came all of the vegetables and fruits of the earth. From then on life was marked by the struggle between the good and bad brothers. The good one made streams to travel on, the bad one made rapids to impede travel on streams. One made useful animals, the other dangerous ones, and so forth. Eventually the good brother killed the bad brother and prepared a place for the good dead in the west.

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This myth has archetypal links to the many other earth-diver creations of native North America—Cherokee, Iroquoian and others. The twins convey the sense of duality in creation that permeates Huron spirituality, one twin being good, the other a de facto Devil. Their mother becomes the earthly vehicle for the power of the great spirit who apparently was the father of her children.

See Also: Animals in Creation, Animistic Creation, Cherokee (Tsalagi), Devil in Creation, Duality in Creation, **Earth-Diver Creation**, Goddess as Creator, Mohawk (Kanienkaha), Onondaga, Primordial Waters in Creation, Seneca (Onödowåga'), Sacrifice in Creation, Sky Woman Descends, Tuscarora, Twins in Creation, Two Creators Motif.

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Hurrian. *See* Anatolian

Iban. *See* Dyak (Dayak)

Icelandic. *See* Norse

IJAW (IJO)

The Ijaw are forest people of the Niger River Delta in Nigeria. One of their beliefs is that God, a female, lets people decide their own fates before birth. Their creation from chaos myth is a small part of an epic story of the heroine Ogboinba, who oversteps her proper boundaries in an attempt to force the creator—Woyengi—to overcome her barrenness by recreating her. As a punishment for her arrogance, Ogboinba is condemned to live forever in the eyes of pregnant women and other people, too. When you look straight into somebody's eyes, say the Ijaw, Ogboinba looks back at you.

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Once upon a time there was a field containing a gigantic iroko tree. Into that field suddenly descended a table with a great pile of dirt on it, a chair, and a very large creation stone. Then, announced by thunder and lightning, Woyengi came down, sat on the chair, rested her feet on the sacred stone, took the earth from the table, and made the first humans out of it. These first humans needed life, so Woyengi held them and breathed breath into them, and they gained life. They were neither male nor female, so she ordered each to choose a gender, and they did. Now she asked the new men and women each to choose a way of life and a way of death. So it was that those who chose riches got riches, those who chose children got children, those who chose to die from smallpox got smallpox, and so forth. All types of lives and all types of diseases and other death-bringing activities were chosen on that day.

One woman asked for successful children, and Ogboinba asked for sacred powers. These women chose to be born in the same village. In fact, they were even born of the same parents, and they lived together as loving sisters.

When it was time, the girls took husbands; the first sister produced many wonderful children, but Ogboinba produced only magic. She became unhappy and went off to find Woyengi to have her way of life changed. This was a mistake, because her way of life had already been chosen. That is why eventually she angered the goddess and had to hide in people's eyes.

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The purpose of this myth seems to be to clarify the belief in the determination of fate by the individual according to a divine law of the female creator. The implication is that people are born to be what they are and that change after the fact is impossible.

See Also: Clay-based Creation, **Creation from Chaos**, Duality in Creation, Goddess as Creator.

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INCA

What little we know of Incan mythology comes from the Spanish explorers and missionaries of South America in the 16th century. The Incas, an ancient culture centered in Cuzco in what is now Peru, were the most powerful and influential people of the Andean region until their defeat by the Spanish, led by Pizarro in 1553. Their influence dominated from what is now Ecuador to northern Chile. The Incas had a highly developed society that was in some ways more advanced than that of its conqueror. There are several versions of an Incan ex nihilo creation myth that in some ways resembles the walkabouts or the Dreaming of the Australian aborigines. There are also Incan chaos-based myths.

The pre-Incas worshipped the sun, Pachacamac. Later, in Incan times, he was sometimes called Viracocha (Wiraqoca). He was beyond comprehension, unnamed, indefinable. The ancient people had simply taught that he rose in the beginning out of Lake Titicaca, and that he had made the stars, planets, and moon and sent them on their way.

There were Incas who said Pachacamac created everything, including humans, out of clay.

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Out of pity Pachacamac sent his son and daughter, born of the moon goddess (as de facto culture heroes) to teach the miserable people how to plant food, make houses, and weave clothes. His children lived at Lake Titicaca, but they were free to come and go as they chose as long as at every stop they stuck into the ground a golden rod their father gave them. Each mark of the rod would be a sign to the people to build a city. "Teach the people to be kind and good," commanded Pachacamac; "I will provide warmth and light." Pachacamac's son M was known as the Inca (the emperor) and his sister was his queen. All Inca rulers descended from this first pair of ancestors.

The Inca and his sister-wife stopped in the valley of Huanacauri and succeeded in planting the golden rod; in fact, it sunk into the earth and disappeared. This is why there is a temple to the sun there to this day. The Inca took this as a sign that



Kon Tici Viracocha God statue in the Tiwanaku archeological site in Bolivia. (© Paule Seux/ Hemis/Corbis)

Pachacamac wished him to settle people there. He and his sister went out separately into the surrounding country to find the people. The Inca went north and his queen went south, preaching Pachacamac's rule. They wore wonderful clothes and ornaments, and they had elaborately pierced ears. The people were moved by them, and they believed and did as they were told. So it was that they all gathered at the place that would become the capital city. The Inca and his followers founded Northern Cuzco (Hanan-Cuzco), and the queen and her converts founded Southern Cuzco (Hurin-Cuzco). All Incan cities and villages forever after divided into upper and lower halves, representing male and female and all of the useful opposites.

In those early days, the Inca taught men their tasks, farming and building. The queen taught the women to do the things they still do—weaving and cooking, for instance. Over the years, the first Inca developed an army to bring all the people around into his benevolent care.

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Another version of this story holds that there were three caves on a hill. They were called Tavern of the Dawn (Paccari-tambo). Out of the central cave emerged the four brothers, Ayar-manco (the leader), Ayar-auca (the warrior), Ayar-cachi (the salty one), and Ayar-oco (the peppery one), as well as their sister-wives, Mamaocclo (the pure one), Mama-huaco (the fighter), Mama-ipagora, and Mama Rawa.

Led by Ayar-manco and his golden rod, the brothers and their sister-wives traveled about inventing the world. Ayar-cachi was dangerously strong, however, so his companions tricked him into a cave and rolled a rock in front of it to lock him in. This is the Traitor's Stone, which is not far from Cuzco.

Near the valley of Cuzco the group saw a sacred idol, and when Ayar-oco touched it, he turned to stone—the stone that is now Huanacauri on Huanacauri Hill.

When the brothers and sisters rested, Ayar-manco thrust the golden rod into the ground, and it sunk deep into the earth. This was a clear sign, so Ayar-manco ordered Ayar-auca to stand on a cairn there to proclaim the new site for a city. At this point Ayar-auca turned into a stone—the cornerstone for the city to be.

Ayar-Manco built Cuzco, the capital of the Incas, high in the mountains. He and Mama-occlo became parents of the first Inca, Sinchi Roq'a. Ayar-Manco also built the House of the Sun, the great temple to the sun-creator, Pachacamac (Viracocha).

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The most striking thing about the Incan creation myths is their bringing together of mythical history and the justification of Incan ways with regard to gender roles, military power, hierarchy, and the establishment of cities.

See Also: Ancestors in Creation, Clay-based Creation, **Creation from Chaos**, Culture Heroes in Creation, Dreaming as Creation, **Ex Nihilo Creation**, Incest in Creation, Sun in Creation.

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INDIAN

India is a vast country with a long religious and, therefore, mythological history. A developed mythology existed in the culture of the Indus Valley before the Aryan/ Indo European invaders brought their own mythology in the second millennium B.C.E. Vedic mythology—the mythology contained in the sacred *Vedas,* the four collections of religious writings of the Samhita period (2000–1100 B.C.E.), and the various commentaries on them in the *Brahmanas, Aranyakas,* and *Upanishads*—are amalgamations of the Indus Valley and Aryan mythologies. Classical Hindu mythology developed from these earlier sources and was augmented in great epics such as the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* and in sacred writings such as the *Puranas.* There are many expressions of creation in this ever-developing mythology. This variety mirrors the variety of gods, and we must remind ourselves that all of the creations, like all of the gods, are, for many Hindus, in reality metaphors for a single absolute principle eventually called Brahman, a principle that is everywhere and nowhere, everything and nothing. Creation in Hindu mythology can be seen as originating ex nihilo in Brahman's thought or can be attributed to the actions of the god Brahma, one of the trinity of major gods that also includes Shiva and Vishnu. Brahma, known as the creator in that trinity, is the personified masculine expression of Brahman. Creation may also be the work of Prajapati, the Vedic progenitor who, like the primal man, Purusha (another version of the progenitor), merges into the figure of Brahma. As the creation myths below suggest, Hindu mythology—which is to say Hindu religion—is among the richest and most sophisticated the world has yet produced.

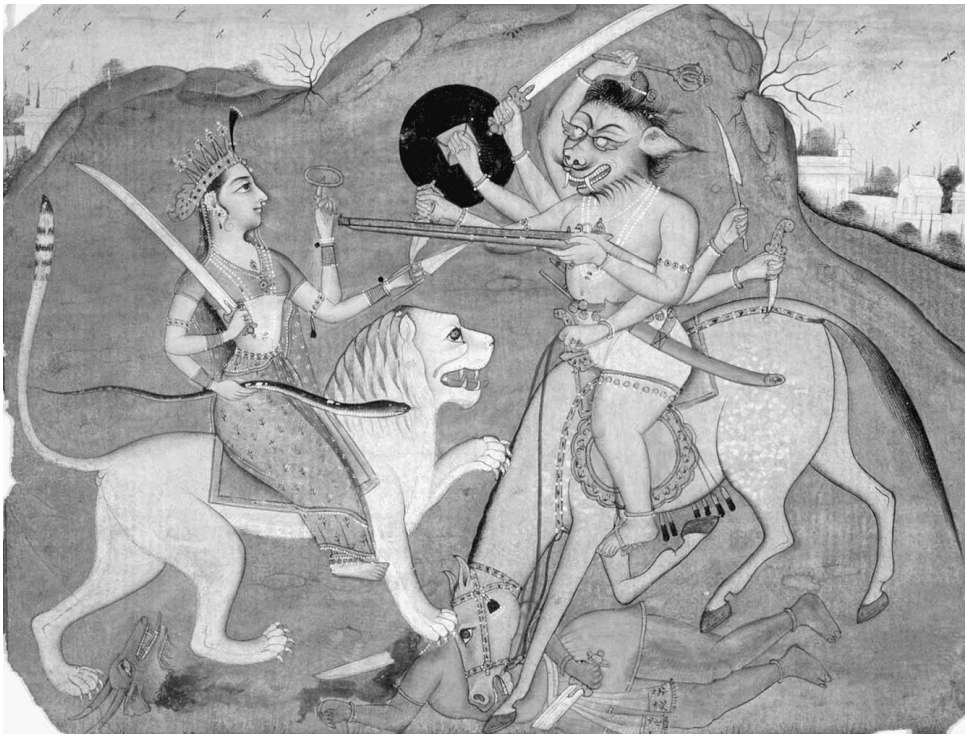
An early myth emerges in fragments from the 1st and 10th books of hymns in the *Rig Veda,* the oldest of the Vedas. In the myth are several familiar creation myth themes: the sacrificial basis of creation, incest in creation, and the separation of the first parents, who, although of opposite gender, resemble the traditional depiction of the Egyptian Nut (Heaven) arched over Geb (Earth). We are also reminded of the Greek story of the merging of Heaven and Earth as Ouranos and Gaia.

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The phallus of Heaven, the male force, reached out to the young girl, his daughter, Earth. Agni, the god of fire, had made the hot passion and seed of Heaven. As the act of union was committed, some seed spilled onto Earth, and words and the rituals were born. The god had satisfied himself with his own daughter. Out of the hot spilled seed came the Angirases, the mediators between gods and humans, who distribute the gifts of the gods. Heaven is our father and Earth is our mother.

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Another *Rig Veda* myth, also from the 10th book, emphasizes the sacrifice of



This picture shows the goddess Durga, who is an incarnation of the anger of Vishnu and Shiva, vanquishing the buffalo demon Mahishasura in one of the great battles between the Devas and the Asuras. (© Angelo Hornak/CORBIS)

a being through whose dismemberment the world is made.

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The thousand-headed, thousand-footed primal man, Purusha, enveloped Earth and was, in fact, the universe, the here and the there, the now and the always. Three quarters of Purusha are of the undifferentiated immortal sphere, one quarter is the sphere of life's forms. When the gods performed the sacrifice of the primal man, his bottom quarter became the world we know. His mouth, out of which came words, became the wise brahmin priest and the god Indra. His arms became the warrior caste, his thighs the common people, and his feet the lowest of the low. Out of the sacrifice of Purusha came the beasts, plants, rituals, sacred words, and the Vedas themselves. From Purusha's mind came the moon, from his eye the sun, from his breath the wind, from his head the sky, from his feet the earth, from his navel the atmosphere.

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In the 10th book of the *Rig Veda* there is still another hymn of creation. It speaks of the necessity of opposites. Without Non-Being there cannot be Being; without Being there cannot be Non-Being. It is a human cry for knowledge of origins, for the meaning of Self, the meaning of

Being. "Who knows the sources of this creation?" the poet asks. If in the beginning there was neither Being nor Non-Being, neither air nor sky, what was there? Who or what oversaw it? What was it when there was no darkness, light, life, or death? We can only say that there was the One, that which breathed of itself deep in the void, that which was heat and became desire and the germ of spirit.

The wise say that Non-Being and Being became one and that chaos became order. Who really knows what happened, whether it came from the One or not? Only the creator knows, and maybe even he knows nothing about it.

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India continues its meditation on creation in the *Brahmanas*, composed in the first millennium B.C.E. As in the earlier creation hymns, the principle of heat is crucial, indicating a connection with other Indo European or Aryan mythologies, especially that of Persia (Iran). The cosmic egg found here is also found in many Indo European mythologies.

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One myth, from the *Satapatha Brahmana*, tells how in the beginning there was only the primeval sea—the waters. It was the waters who wished to reproduce, and through devotions became heated enough to produce a golden egg that floated about for a time. Then from the egg came Prajapati. It took a year for him to come, and so it takes about that amount of time for a woman or a cow to give birth. After he broke out of the egg, Prajapati rested on its shell for another year or so before he tried to speak. The sound he made—the Word, his sounded breath—became Earth. His next sound became sky. Other sounds became the seasons. After waiting another year Prajapati stood in his shell. He could see even then from the beginning of his life to its end in one thousand years. Prajapati gave himself the power of reproduction. Some say he created the fire god, Agni, out of himself. With his hot breathing up into the sky (*div*), he created the gods (*devas*) above, and now there was light (*diva*). With his breathing down Prajapati created the Asuras and the darkness of the earth. To avoid a cosmic struggle between light and dark, Prajapati overcame the Asuras with evil. Now there were, however, day and night.

Prajapati realized that by creating beings he had created time, and we know that Prajapati is, in a sense, time.

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In the *Aitareya Brahmana*, Prajapati and his daughter (the sky or dawn) are characters in a reworking of the incest myth from the *Rig Veda*. We note the stronger presence of the taboo associated with the act. Prajapati came to his daughter as a stag; she had the form of a doe. The gods watched and were horrified that Prajapati was doing "what is not done," and they created the monstrous and wild Rudra to punish him. Rudra struck Prajapati with his arrow, and the progenitor became the constellation we call Capricorn or Deer's Head. In the piercing of Prajapati, his seed spilled and became a lake. The gods called this lake "not to be spoiled," so the seed of man is not to be spoiled. The gods gave the seed heat and Agni made it flow, and it

became the Aditya (sun gods), the cattle, and many other things.

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Still another Brahmana, the *Kausitaki Brahmana*, tells how, when Prajapati wanted to have offspring, he practiced deep asceticism that generated such heat as to give birth out of himself to fire, the sun, the moon, the wind, and the female dawn. Prajapati ordered the five to practice asceticism, and they did. Dawn took the form of a beautiful nymph, and when they saw her, the other four were so moved that their seed flowed. When they told their father, he made a golden bowl in which to collect the seed so it would not be lost. Out of the bowl of seed sprang a thousand-armed god, who took hold of his father and demanded a name before he would eat food. Prajapati named him Bhava (existence).

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The next series of Hindu scriptures is called the *Upanishads* (learning sessions), in which thinkers of the period between about 800 and 400 B.C.E. gave thought to the earlier writings. The creation theories of the *Upanishads* quite clearly develop from those of the earlier texts and contain familiar themes. In the oldest of the Upanishads, the *Chandogya Upanishad*, we still find the predominance of reproduction, heat, and primordial waters in a reworking of the story of Prajapati and the golden egg. Prajapati has now become the creator god Brahma.

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There was only Non-Being in the beginning. Non-Being developed into an egg. After a year the egg broke into two parts, one silver, one gold. The silver part is earth; the gold part is the sky. The various inside parts of the egg are the mountains, rivers, clouds, and so forth. The sun was born from the egg. At his birth, everything rose toward him. The sun is Brahma.

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In the same Upanishad there is a version of the myth that postulates a world beginning not in Non-Being but in Being, for how could Being emerge from Non-Being? It states that Being wanted to reproduce itself, so it gave off heat, which in turn procreated itself and gave off water. This is why we perspire today. The water in turn procreated itself and gave off food, which, of course, comes from water.

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The *Barhadaranyaka Upanishad* returns to the early Vedic figure of Purusha, the primal man.

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In the beginning there was Atman (Soul—the One within) in the form of Purusha. When he looked about and saw nothing, he said "I am." He was lonely, however, so he became two; a husband and a wife. They came together and mankind was born. Then the wife became frightened and turned herself into a cow to hide; the man became a bull, found her, and cattle were born. So it went for the many forms of animals.

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In a sense, Atman is Brahman within. In the *Kena Upanishad* the question of

the nature of the ultimate One, Brahman, is considered. Brahman should not be confused with the creator god Brahma, although Brahma, like everything else, is in Brahman. Brahman itself is beyond gender or any other kind of definition or comprehension.

What spirit awakens the mind, makes life begin, and makes us speak in words? Who is the spirit behind seeing and hearing? "It is the ear of the ear, the eye of the eye, and the word of words, the mind of mind, and the life of life." Brahman cannot be spoken, but the spirit behind the possibility of speaking is Brahman.

The *Lawbook of Manu*, written in the second century B.C.E., is one of several books that continues the tradition of developing and commenting on scripture. The *Lawbook of Manu* takes its name from the tradition of Manu, the first human in each age of existence. Again, in this myth we find the motif of the cosmic egg and procreation. We also find the element of creation by thought.

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The Self-Existent Brahman thought of the waters, and they were. His seed in the waters became a golden egg, and out of the egg Brahman was born as progenitor of all. Out of Brahman came the male Purusha, who is also Brahma. As for Brahman, it remained in the egg for a year before dividing the egg by thought into Heaven and Earth.

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After 300 C.E., the process of reexamining scripture continued in the *Puranas* (old stories). Among other issues, these works consider the whole question of the identity of Brahman as revealed in the various gods. The *Vishnu Purana* contains an earth-diver creation myth.

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Brahma, the form taken by Brahman, the god without beginning or end, awoke and saw the empty universe. There were only the waters—the progeny of the eternal Brahman. Brahma decided that the earth lay beneath the waters. As at the beginning of each preceding creation he took the form of an animal—in this case a wild boar. In this form, based on the sacrifices of the sacred Vedas, Brahman as Brahma, the Great Boar, dove to the bottom of the primordial waters to find Mother Earth. She received him with joy and hymns of praise, recognizing him as the creative principle behind all that was. "No one knows your true Being," she sang, "but everything that the mind can conceive or the senses perceive is a form of you." Brahman is Brahma, Vishnu (the great preserver god), and Shiva (the destroyer god). He is the soul of souls. Brahman can only be worshipped in the many forms it takes, since Brahman is formless.

The Great Boar came to the earth, and the wise praised him as the source of all things. He raised up the Earth to where it floats now, a "mighty vessel" on the surface of the waters. Then Brahman in the form of Brahma created the world. He does this at the beginning of each kalpa, each creation that follows each world dissolution. He gives form to the power within the things to be created; that is, he gives form to Brahman.

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The *Shiva Purana* contains an axis mundi creation story dedicated to the great god Shiva. Shiva was angered by Brahma's having created the world in his absence so, fulfilling his role as destroyer, he burned up the world and Brahma bowed before Shiva's superior power. Pleased with this subservience, Shiva asked Brahma what he would like as a reward. Brahma asked that his created world be restored. In return, he would worship the Shiva *linga* the god's phallic symbol joining past present and future. So Shiva broke off his linga and flung it to the earth, where it reached from Hell below to somewhere in the heavens above. Vishnu tried to find its earthly source and Brahma tried to find its heavenly tip. Neither succeeded because the *linga* is the ultimate axle of the world, the ultimate axis mundi, Brahman itself, the endless source of creation and all existence.

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There are many stories of Brahma as creator. In the epics—particularly the *Mahabharata*—he is depicted in more personal, less abstract terms than in the more self-consciously religious *Puranas*. Brahma, in the *Mahabharata*, is given human qualities such as jealousy. Called Prajapati again, or Grandfather, he creates wanton women for the purpose of stirring up men and bringing them to desire and anger. In this way men would be deluded and prevented from usurping the position of the gods. In another part of the *Mahabharata*, Brahma creates the woman, Death, to preserve the distinction between men and gods.

The *Vedas* and the epic, the *Mahabharata,* contain versions of a creation story in which, at the suggestion of Vishnu (Narayana), the gods and demons churn the primordial ocean in order to obtain the lost *soma,* which guarantees their immortality.

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To churn the ocean, the immortals placed Mount Mandara, uprooted by the serpent Ananta (Vasuki), on the back of the great Tortoise, an avatar of Vishnu, who dove to the ocean floor so that the mountain could be placed on his back. The mountain was used as the churning stick. Ananta became the churning cord. According to the epic version of the myth, as the gods and demons churned the sea, clouds and lightning came out of Ananta's mouth and flowers came down from the spinning mountain top and formed garlands on the gods. The motion of the whole process caused a crushing of animals and great trees, and a fire resulted, which was put out by the god Indra. From the smashing of the trees and plants and the juices exuding from the process, the source of soma flowed into the sea. The sea became milk, and eventually the milk became butter, which would be used for ritual purposes. Urged on by Vishnu, the gods and demons continued churning, and beautiful elements of creation came from the waters. But out of the churning also came a terrible poison that enveloped the universe. It was Shiva (see below) who, as a ritual chant, was able to take the poison into his throat and swallow it and in so doing save the universe. This is why Shiva's throat is blue.

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No mythological tradition is more complex or colorful than that of India. Every aspect of existence is accounted for and each story is a metaphorical meditation on creation. The gods all represent aspects of the one reality—in a sense, the only reality, which is Brahman.

See Also: Animals in Creation, Animistic Creation, Axis Mundi in Creation, Babylonian, Cosmic Egg in Creation, **Creation from Chaos**, Death Origin in Creation, Dismemberment of Primordial Being as Creation, **Ex Nihilo Creation**, Finnish, **Earth-Diver Creation**, Greek, Incest in Creation, Norse, Persian, Primordial Waters in Creation, Sacrifice in Creation, Separation of Heaven and Earth in Creation, Sexual Impulse in Creation, Sun in Creation, Thought-based Creation, Woman as Source of Evil, Word-based Creation, **World Parent Creation**, Zoroastrian.

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Indonesian. *See* Batak; Ceram; Dyak (Dayak); Yami

Inuit. *See* Inupiat (Inupiaq); Kodiak; Kukulik; Netsilik; Nugumuit; Oqomuit

INUPIAT (INUPIAQ)

The Inuit (Eskimo) people who live along the Noatak River in northwest Alaska are an Inupiat tribe whose creation myth is one of many Raven-based myths of the region.

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Raven, who was then shaped like a human being, woke up in Heaven and suddenly became aware of himself in the primeval darkness. Gradually he examined himself, feeling his mouth, nose, ears, and other body parts. He became aware, too, of the little bump on his forehead that later would become his beak. Although he could not see anything in the darkness, Raven discovered that he could move around, and he did so on his hands and knees. Suddenly he came to the edge of an abyss and backed away. He found a little hard object and planted it in the clay that was all around him and a tree quickly grew. Then a small bird lighted on him. It was a sparrow. But Raven was lonely, so be made a being like himself out of clay. This being became violent, so Raven threw him into the abyss. He would become Tornaq, the first evil spirit. Raven crawled back to his tree and found a whole forest. With the little sparrow he continued exploring and soon realized they were on an island of sorts. Now curious about the abyss, Raven asked Sparrow to fly down to see what was there. After a long while the sparrow returned and said it was land in the process of forming. Raven decided to make wings for himself like Sparrow's but bigger. This he did with sticks and then his body became feathered. Now he was really the Raven we know, and he flew down with Sparrow to the new land. That land, of course, was our Earth.

As soon as he got to Earth Raven set about planting and creating. Some say he made humans out of clay. Others say he found the first human in a pod of one of his new plants. In any case, Raven brought humans into being and he taught them to hunt, fish, and plant. And he taught them proper ways to behave.

When he was finished with his work Raven left the people for good, reminding them not to forget him, and on his way away he created the heavenly bodies, including the sun, so that there would be light on Earth.

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This is a myth that psychiatrist and mythologist Marie Louise von Franz identifies as a coming into consciousness myth, thus associating it with a psychological process that applies to us all. Raven's awakening is also ours. Also in the story are many of the common motifs of the world's creation myths, including the theme of the earth-diving animals, the imperfect creation of humans out of clay, the primeval darkness, and the role of the creator as a culture hero teaching the people. There is also the tradition of the shape-shifting trickster creator—often, in the Pacific Northwest and Arctic regions, Raven, who is also responsible for the creation of the devil, the "first evil spirit." A hint of the earth-diver type is indicated by Raven's sending of the small bird down to check the land below. A less common theme is that of the creator's not knowing where he came from or how the process of the creation of Heaven and Earth began. Somehow this makes the creator more one of us than a distant unknowable being.

See Also: Animals in Creation, Clay-based Creation, **Creation from Chaos**, Culture Heroes in Creation, Deus Otiosus or Absconditus in Creation, Devil in Creation, **Earth-Diver Creation**, **Ex Nihilo Creation**, Imperfect or Accidental Creation, Raven in Creation, Trickster in Creation.

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IPURINA (APURINA)

The Ipurina of the western Amazon region of Brazil have a creation myth dominated by a flood.

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The chief of the Storks, the Ipurina creator, was Mayuruberu. It is not clear why, but he made a great flood by causing a huge pot of boiling water in the sun (perhaps the sun itself) to overflow. It seems that although all plant life was destroyed, the Ipurina survived and began working to establish a new world. Maturuberu threatened to devour anyone who did not work.

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In Ipurina mythology the flood takes precedence over any original creation. In fact, it is the flood story through which the Ipurina take their collective identity.

See Also: **Ex Nihilo Creation**, Fall from Grace in Creation, Flood in Creation Myths, Sun in Creation.

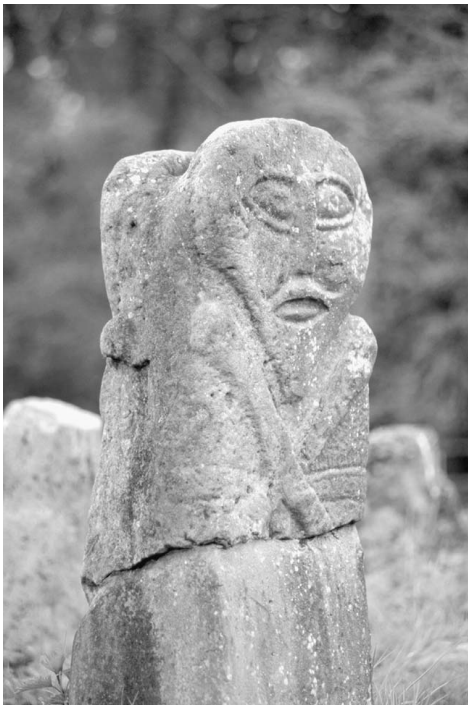
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Iranian. *See* Persian (Iranian); Zoroastrian

IRISH

The Irish developed a mythology essentially separate from that of the continental Celts and even their neighbors the Welsh Celts. Little or nothing exists of an Irish creation myth *per se*. What does exist is a history of invasions that eventually led to the establishment of what we now think of as Ireland and the Irish people. There are conflicting versions of certain details in the story but the essential elements are consistent.



A Janus figure belived to be a relic of the Druidic cult, which existed on Boa Island long after Christianity arrived in Ireland. (© Michael St. Maur Sheil/CORBIS)

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The invasions begin, according to the Christian redactors of Irish stories, with the arrival of Noah's granddaughter Cesair (or of Banba, one of the eponymous queens, or symbols of Irish sovereignty) before the flood. According to the Cesair myth, the flood destroyed all of these first invaders except for Cesair's husband Fintan (the "Ancient White One") who, according to some, saved himself by changing into a salmon. The myth claims that Fintan survived into the Christian period as a source of knowledge about the past.

Partholon and his people were the second invaders. It was Partholon who developed social customs and traditions and who began clearing land. But after fighting the simultaneously arriving Fomorians (Fomorii or Fomhoire), one-armed, one-legged, violent demons from under or beyond the sea, the Patholonians died of a plague.

Next came Nemed (Nemhedh) and his four women, the originators of the Nemedians, who also developed customs and crafts and cleared land. When Nemed was killed in battle with the Fomorians, his people were so mistreated by their conquerors that they revolted and emigrated to other lands. According to one version of the story, a group descending from the Nemedians returned to Ireland as the Firbolg (Fir Bholg) or "bag men"—so-named, say some, because, as

slaves in distant Thrace, they had been made to carry bags of earth.

The Firbolg, who could be representatives of an actual pre-Celtic people in Ireland, are credited with the important division of the island into five provinces or coiceds ("fifths") and with the establishment of a sacred kingship based on the relationship between the king's essential integrity and the land's fertility. The five provinces, which are basic to Irish myth and history, are Ulster in the north, Connaught in the west, Munster in the south, Leinster in the east, all held together by Mide (Meath) with Tara, the seat of the sacred king, at its center. The age of the Firbolg was a golden age of prosperity and peace.

The next invaders, the Tuatha De Danann ("People of Danu"), are the closest beings in Irish mythology to the deities of the great pantheons of the Indo European tradition. Perhaps also descendants of the Nemedians, who in their time of exile—some say in the Northern Greek islands—learned the mysteries of creativity, the Tuatha had, in one way or another, become deities by the time they arrived in Ireland. They brought with them great powers of magic and druidry, symbolized by four talismans: the Fal Stone, which cried out to announce the true king when he stood on it, Lugh's Spear of Victory, Nuada's (Nuadha or Nuadhu) Undefeatable Sword, and Dagda's never-empty Cauldron.

The Tuatha De Danann, as their name indicates, were descendants of the mother goddess, Danu, of whom little is known. Their functions reflect a version of the Indo European tripartite arrangement: sovereign/priest, warrior, and artisan.

When the Tuatha arrived in Ireland and established their court at Tara, they fought and defeated the Firbolg in the First Battle of Mag Tuired in which King Nuada lost his arm. Although the arm was replaced with a silver one by Dian Cecht and later with a real one by Dian Cecht's son Miach, Nuada abdicated his position as king because of his weakened condition when the Tuatha were faced with a new battle, this time against the Fomorians, who had returned to Ireland. Bres (the "Beautiful One"), the son of a Fomorian father and a Tuatha mother, was elected king, but when he proved so unsuitable as to elicit the satire of the poet Coibre—the voice of poets always carried great weight in Ireland—he was asked to resign. Instead, he turned to his enemy relatives for support, and the Second Battle of Mag Tuired resulted.

Before the battle, Nuada was restored to the throne, but he soon ceded his power to Lugh, who came to Tara and proved his ability to call successfully upon magical powers. Lugh led the battle, finally facing the horrid Balor, who killed both Nuada and Queen Macha and whose horrid single eye could destroy whole armies. With his sling stone, Lugh hit Balor's eye and the stone forced the eye back through the demon's skull and turned its evil powers against the Fomorians, who were themselves destroyed and removed from Ireland forever. Bres was captured but allowed to live in return for revealing Fomorian secrets of agriculture, the Fomorians being, like the Norse Vanir as well as the Greek and Vedic giants against whom the gods must wage war, representatives of the powers

of both fertility and destruction that exist together in nature.

The next mytho-historical invasion of Ireland was that of the Gaels or Irish Celts, represented by the Milesians or Sons of Mil Espaine ("Soldier of Spain"). There are many stories of how the Milesians eventually came to Ireland, and the Christian monks who wrote the *Book of Invasions* gave this story of Irish origins a resemblance to the biblical Book of *Exodus*. The Milesians, they said, journeyed from Scythia to Egypt, Spain, and eventually Ireland, where they landed, led by the poet Amairgen (Amhairghin), who used his Moses-like prophetic power and wisdom to push aside the defending cloud of mist arranged by Tuatha De Danann on the Feast of Beltene (May Day). The poet, in a sense, *sings* the new Ireland of the Celts into existence, containing within himself, like Krishna-Vishnu in the *Bhagavadgita* or the persona of the poems of Walt Whitman, all the elements of creation: "The sea's wind am I," he sings,

> The ocean's wave,
> The sea's roar,
> The Bull of the Seven Fights,
> The vulture on the cliff,
> The drop of dew,
> The fairest flower,
> The boldest boar,
> The salmon in the pool,
> The lake on the plain,
> The skillful word,
> The weapon's point,
> The god who makes fire I am,
> . . .

On their way to Tara, the Milesians met the triune goddess, represented by the eponymous queens Eire, Banba (Banbha), Fotla (Fodla), who represented Irish sovereignty (sometimes together or individually they are given the name "Sovranty"). The queens tried to convince the invaders, led by Donn, to preserve their names forever as the names of the conquered island. Donn refused, and his early death was foretold by Eire. At Tara the Milesians met with the husbands of the queens, the three kings, Mac Cuill, Mac Cecht, and Mac Greine, who asked for a temporary truce. It was decided by Amairgen that the Milesians should put out to sea and invade again. The second invasion was prevented by the magic wind of the Tuatha until the stronger magic of the poet's words caused the Tuatha wind to fail. The Milesians then landed and, although Donn was killed, were able to defeat the old gods. The peace settlement left the Celts in control of the world above ground and the Tuatha in control of the land below. It was Amairgen who declared that Ireland should be named for the triune goddess. The Tuatha were said from then on to live in *sidhe*, underground mounds, and were themselves referred to ever after as the *sidh*, the "fairies" or "little people" of legend in Ireland.

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Insofar as this is a creation myth, it involves the gradual development of an Irish identity out of the chaos of numerous invasions, culminating in the singing of Ireland into existence by the great Celtic poet priest, Amairgen. Out of the chaotic sea come the Celts and out of the chaotic potential of words, comes the cosmic order of the poet's song.

See Also: Animals in Creation, **Creation from Chaos**, Celtic, Fall from Grace in Creation,

Flood in Creation Myths, Goddess as Creator, Word-based Creation

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Iroquoian. *See* Cherokee (Tsalagi); Huron; Mohawk (Kanienkaha); Oneida; Onondaga; Seneca (Onödowåga'); Tuscarora; Wyandot

ISLAMIC

In the Qur'an, the holy book of Islam said to have been dictated by the angel Jibril (Gabriel) to the prophet Mohammed in the seventh century C.E., we find several references to an ex nihilo creation. At one point the book asks the people how they could not believe in a god (Allah) who was so powerful as to create the world in two days. In Sura (Section) XLI, the Qur'an says that Allah created Heaven and Earth by calling them to him "in obedience."

We are also told by the Qur'an that Allah created the world "to set forth his truth," that man was created from "a moist germ," and that the merciful God also created cattle and the fruits of the earth (Sura XVI). Elsewhere the book says that God created man "of the dust, then of the germs of life, then of thick blood." (Sura XL)

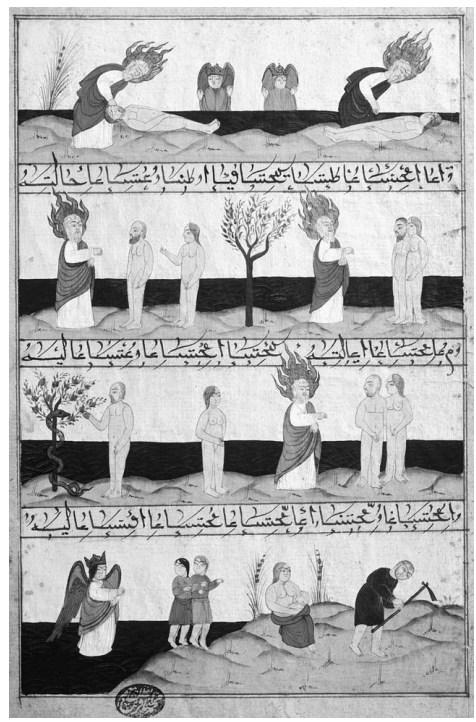
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It is God who hath given you the earth as a sure foundation, and over it built up the Heaven, and formed you, and made your forms beautiful, and feedeth you with good things. This is God your Lord. Blessed then be God the Lord of the Worlds!

He is the Living One. No God is there but He. Call then upon Him and offer Him pure worship. Praise be the God the Lord of the Worlds!

Say: Verily I am forbidden to worship what ye call on beside God, after that the clear tokens have come to me from my Lord, and I am bidden to surrender myself to the Lord of the Worlds.

He it is who created you of the dust, then of the germs of life, then of thick blood, then brought you forth infants: then he letteth you reach your full strength, and then become old men (but some of you die first), and reach the ordained term. And this that ye may haply understand.



Genesis story and the creation of Adam and Eve by Allah, Ottoman bible, 16th century. (The Art Archive / University Library Istanbul / Gianni Dagli Orti)

It is He who giveth life and death; and when He decreeth a thing, He only saith of it, "Be," and it is. [Sura XL, The Believer: 66–70]

Your Lord is God, who in six days created the heavens and the Earth, and then mounted the throne: He throweth the veil of night over the day: it pursueth it swiftly: and he created the sun and the moon and the stars, subjected to laws by His behest: Is not all creation and its empire His? Blessed be God the Lord of the Worlds! Call upon your Lord with lowliness and in secret, for He loveth not transgressors.

And commit not disorders on the earth after it hath been well-ordered; and call on Him with fear and longing desire: Verily the mercy of God is nigh unto the righteous.

And He it is who sendeth forth the winds as the heralds of his compassion, until they bring up the laden clouds, which we drive along to some dead land and send down water thereon, by which we cause an upgrowth of all kinds of fruit.—Thus we will bring forth the dead. Haply ye will reflect.

In a rich soil, its plants spring forth a undantly by the will of its Lord, and in that which is bad, they spring forth but scantily. Thus do we diversify our signs for those who are thankful. [Sura VII, Al Araf: 52–57] [Rodwell translation]

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It is important to note the influence here of the creation myth in the Hebrew Book of Genesis. Muslims accept the validity of the Bible.

See Also: **Ex Nihilo Creation**, Hebrew, Swahili, Word-based Creation.

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With Margaret Leeming, Instructor of Religious Studies, Vassar College

JAIN

Jainism is an ancient Indian religious system of the sramanic tradition, a tradition that perhaps has roots in the pre-Hindu religion of the Indus Valley. Jainism as we know it now took form in the sixth century B.C.E. The name *Jain* comes from the *jinas* (victors), 24 great teachers, the last of whom, Mahavira, was a contemporary of the Buddha. The teachers attempted to revive the ancient pre-Hindu tradition in which the goal of the individual is victory over worldly attachments. The victor's soul is freed by strict ascetic practices rather than by prayer. Gods as such are of little importance to Jains. What might be called their non-creation creation myth is contained in the ninth-century *Mahapurana* by the Jain teacher Jinasena.

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Those who suppose that a creator made the world and mankind are misled. If God is the creator, where was He before creation, and how could a non-material being make anything so material as this world? How could God have made the world with no materials to start with? Those who suggest that God made the material first and then the world are trapped in a chicken-or-egg question.

Those who say raw materials came about naturally are just as trapped, because we might just as well say that the world could, therefore, have created itself and have come about naturally.

If it is suggested that God created the world by a simple act of His will, one would have to ask how so perfect a being could have willed the creation of something else?

There are many arguments to support the idea that it is foolish to assert that the world was created by God. Why, for instance, would God kill his own creations, and if it is suggested that some of his creations are evil, one must ask why God would have created them in the first place, He being said to be perfect.

The fact is: the world is as uncreated as time; it has no beginning and no end; it exists through its own being and is divided into Heaven, Earth, and Hell.

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This myth is appropriate to Jainism, because it provides a reason (of sorts) for a philosophy and religion that is not focused on deities and that stresses the unimportance, the ultimately "uncreated" aspect of the world.

See Also: **Ex Nihilo Creation**, Indian.

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JAPANESE (SHINTO)

Two great sources contain the primary elements of the Japanese, which is to say, Shinto creation myths. These are the *Kojiki* (Records of Ancient Matters) collected in 712 C.E. by Futo no Yasumuro, and the *Nihongi* (Chronicles of Japan) compiled in 720 C.E. Both works are influenced by Chinese thought, and both reflect the animistic approach of the Shinto religion, the worship of the divine forces (*kami*) and forms in nature. *Shinto* in Japanese is *kami no michi.* The term *Shinto* derives from the Chinese characters for "divine being" (shen) and "the way" (*tao*). The *Kojiki* and *Nihongi* establish a cosmology of three levels: Heaven, the World, and the Underworld.

The central figures in the creation myth that takes place in the Shinto universe are Izanami and Izanagi, who can be seen at the surface level as personifications of the Chinese principles of *yin* and *yang.* Izanami and Izanagi are the first ancestors in a creation from chaos myth in which is found the common theme of the separation of world parents.

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According to the *Kojiki*, there was a time when there was only chaos until Heaven and Earth separated. At that time the Three High Deities created the passive and active principles, Izanami (Female who Invites) and Izanagi (Male who Invites). These two are the first ancestors, the makers, and the basis of all creation.

Upon entering the light, Izanagi washed his eyes, and the sun and moon were released. By bathing in the primordial sea, the gods of earth and sky were released.

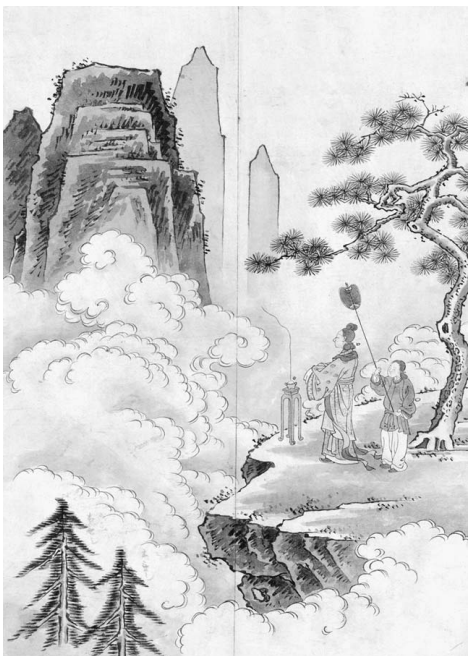
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The beginning as described in the *Nihongi* is more elaborate. In fact, the

Nihongi creation is a tragic tale containing many themes found in other mythologies. There is a graphically phallic coital relationship between Heaven and Earth, for instance, and an Orpheus-like journey into the underworld to search for a lost loved one.

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In ancient times, Heaven and Earth were still one. The *In* (yin) and *Yo* (yang) were still not separated. There was only an egg-like chaos containing the seeds of creation. Heaven was made of the purer part of the mass; the heavy part was Earth. So Heaven raised himself first and the islands of earth began to form. Then between Heaven and Earth grew a strange plantlike form that became a great male god, followed by two others, also male. All were formed by the will of Heaven Next, six deities, the *kami*, were formed, and then Izanami and Izanagi.



This drawing shows a cleric standing beneath a pine tree on the edge of a cliff, making an offering and burning incense for the mountain gods. (Library of Congress)

The first ancestors in Heaven wondered what lay below. So it was that they thrust down the jeweled spear of Heaven and stirred it about in the sea. As they lifted it, the liquid on the tip of the spear formed the island Onogoro-jima (Spontaneously Conceived Island). The deities descended to the island and built a land, with Onogoro-jima as its central pillar.

Izanami and Izanagi wished to marry, so they devised a plan of courtship whereby they would walk in opposite directions around the world axle, the great pillar, until they met. Then Izanami said, "What a beautiful youth I have met!" Izanagi objected, however, that it should have been he, the man, who spoke first, so they began the process again. When they met he said, "What a beautiful maiden I have met." Then Izanagi asked Izanami how her body was, and she said there was a place in her body that was empty and was the basis of her femininity. Izanagi said there was a part of his body that was superfluous but was the source of his masculinity. Perhaps if the superfluous and the empty, the masculine part and the feminine part, could join, procreation would be possible. Thus Izanami and Izanagi became one as husband and wife. Out of their union came many islands, and finally they created the Great Eight Island Country (Japan) and the sun goddess (Amaterasu or Ohohiro-me no muchi) as queen of the universe. Amaterasu was so radiant that her parents sent her to Heaven to rule there. Then

they produced the moon god to be their daughter's consort. Some of the children these two produced were dangerous—especially the Impetuous One and the god of fire. The first was exiled to the land of *Yomi* (the underworld) and the second burned his mother to death, but not before she gave birth to the water goddess, Midzuhano-me, and the earth goddess, Haniyama-hime, whom the fire god took as a wife.

Izanagi went to Yomi in search of the dead Izanami, but he arrived too late; she had already eaten food cooked in Yomi. She ordered her husband not to look at her, but Izanagi lit a torch and saw his mate in her state of putrefaction. In anger at his disobedience and at his having shamed her, Izanami and the Ugly Females (Furies) of Yomi chased Izanagi all the way to the land's entrance. Once he had escaped, Izanagi was plagued by bad luck, as he had visited the land of the dead. After being cleansed by sacred waters, Izanagi isolated himself forever on a distant island. Izanami became queen of the underworld.

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This myth is distinctly Japanese in its emphasis on formality, in the relationship between men and women, in the existence of strict taboos. It also provides the basis for the belief in the relationship between the Japanese people—specifically the emperor—and the sun goddess Amaterasu. In addition to the Japanese cultural elements there are common motifs such as the Orpheus descent and failure, creation from chaos and the separation of primal elements as a source for the world we know.

See Also: Ancestors in Creation, Animistic Creation, Cosmic Egg in Creation, **Creation from Chaos**, Deus Otiosus or Absconditus in Creation, Goddess as Creator, Separation of Heaven and Earth in Creation, Sexual Impulse in Creation, Sun in Creation, **World Parent Creation**.

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Jewish. *See* Hebrew; Talmudic

JIVARO (SHUAR)

The Jivaro (Shuar) are an indigenous people of the eastern Andes in Ecuador and Peru. Known traditionally for their head-shrinking practices, the Jivaro fought ferociously against Incan and then Spanish domination. To this day, many Jivaro isolate themselves from the ways of the contemporary world, practicing their own animistic religion in which spirits inhabit all things and in which deities such as the Earth Mother, Nungui, and the protecting spirit, Arutam, play important roles. Theirs is not a happy mythology; it is dominated by a series of battles among the gods and an essential duality of which people are the victims. Their creation story is an animistic world parent myth.

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At first there were the creator, Kumpara, and his wife, Chingaso. Their son was Etsa, the sun. One night Kumpara placed some mud in his mouth and spit it onto his son. In this way the girl Nantu, the moon, was conceived. This complicated manner of conception was accomplished so Etsa could marry Nantu, who was not born of his own mother.

Nantu resisted Etsa's advances, however, and escaped to the sky, where she painted herself in dark somber colors and designs. A bird, Auhu, who also was enamored of Nantu, saw her leaving and tried to follow her, but Nantu cut down the vine on which he was trying to reach the sky. Etsa was extremely angry when he discovered Nantu's escape, and he decided to follow her. Pulled up by a parrot on each wrist and a parakeet on each knee, he caught Nantu and fought violently with her, causing eclipses. When she had been overcome, Nantu wept. This is why it rains when the moon's face gets red.

Nantu now went off alone and produced her own child, Nuhi, by breathing on dirt. The jealous bird, Auhu, broke the clay child and the remains became the earth. Lonely now, Nantu finally agreed to be Etsa's wife. They had a son, Unushi the sloth, who was the first Jivaro. Unushi was given the forest on Earth as a living place.

Etsa and Nantu went on reproducing, always using Earth as a mating place. They produced the various animals.

The woman, Mika, was born of a mysterious egg sent by Chingaso. Mika was given to Unushi in marriage, and Etsa and Nantu instructed them on how to live. Unushi was lazy, however, and did little work. To this day the Jivaro women work harder than the men.

Unushi and Mika took a canoe down the river. A son, Ahimbi the water snake, was born to them in the canoe. Out of other eggs sent by Chingaso there came other animals and birds.

Some of the birds helped Mika and her husband find food, and the anaconda made them an axe. Ahimbi used it to cut down a tree and make his own canoe; he wanted to be on his own. He traveled about and eventually came back to see his parents. Mika was alone, however; Unushi had wandered off into the forest and got lost. That night Ahimbi slept with his mother and did not wake up soon enough to prevent Etsa from seeing them together. In great anger Etsa exiled the couple, and they wandered about producing offspring and looking for shelter. The animals were disgusted by their incest, however, and would not help them. Unushi, upon learning what Mika and his son had done, blamed Nantu, beat her, and buried her in a hole. She escaped with Auhu's help, but since she was not grateful to him, he still cries in the night for her return.

Nantu told what had happened to her and the sons of Mika, and Ahimbi killed Unushi. Then Mika killed the sons for having killed her husband. The struggle between Mika and her sons caused thunder, lightning, and violent rain. Out of the loudest clap of thunder and a bolt of lightning sprang the fully armed Jivaro warrior, Masata (War), who from then on stirred up all the people and gods against each other.

Etsa and Nantu blamed Ahimbi for the trouble that had come to the earth.

Etsa imprisoned him under the great falls, where, as indicated by the turbulent waters there, he is still trying to get free. Now Ahimbi wishes for peace; he sends up sprays of water to make rainbows so Etsa will see that he means well. Masata, however, always obscures the sign by sending mist or rain to block it. Once Chingaso came in a canoe wanting to rescue Ahimbi, but the snake, not recognizing the goddess, turned over her canoe in the rough water and ate her. So the wars go on.

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The essence of this myth is etiological. It explains the nature not only of the cosmos—stars, eclipses and the like, but the nature of human ills, based as they are on collisions of various desires and egos since the beginning of creation.

See Also: Animals in Creation, Animistic Creation, Clay-based Creation, Cosmic Egg in Creation, **Creation from Chaos**, Duality in Creation, Etiological Creation Myths, Incest in Creation, Sexual Impulse in Creation, Sun in Creation, **World Parent Creation**.

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JOSHUA (TCE'METUN)

The Joshua Native Americans of Oregon have an earth-diver myth that is a good example of the imperfect creation theme.

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In the beginning, before there was land—only the sky, flat sea, and fog—two men lived in a sweat house on the water. One of these was the creator, Xowalaci; he stayed inside most of the time while his friend sat outside watching. One day the friend saw what looked like land approaching over the sea. It had two trees on it. Finally the land struck the sweat house, stopped, and began to expand. The watcher went in and told the creator, but the land was not yet solid, so the creator smoked a pipe. Then he blew smoke on the land, which stopped the land's motion and caused the flowers to bloom and grass to grow.

The creator made five mud cakes. One of these became a stone; he dropped it into the water and listened for it to reach the bottom. He kept dropping mud cakes until the land came near to the surface. Then the waves came; as they receded Xowalaci scattered tobacco seed and sand appeared. Then the breakers came, again leaving more land. Xowalaci stomped on it and it became hard land.

The creator saw a man's tracks and knew they meant trouble. He brought the water over the new land to rid it of the man, but the tracks always came back. Indeed, there has always been unexpected trouble in the world.

Now it was time to make people, so Xowalaci tried mixing grass and mud and rubbing it. He created a house and placed the two first figures in it. In a few days a dog and a bitch appeared, and later the bitch gave birth to puppies. Xowalaci tried adding white sand to the mix to make people, but this time he made snakes. Out of some bad dogs he made water monsters. Still he could not make people.

The creator thought and thought until his friend suggested that he might have

a try at creating. He suggested that he smoke the tobacco that night to see if anything would come out of the smoke. After three days of the friend's smoking, a house appeared and soon after that a beautiful woman. The woman was lonely, so Xowalaci gave his companion to the woman and proclaimed that their children would be the people.

To get the man and woman together, Xowalaci made the woman sleep. Then the man went to her. In a dream she experienced a man with her, but in the morning there was no man.

Soon a child was born. The woman longed for the father; she took the child on her back and searched for 10 years for her husband. She neglected the child during the search and he almost died. They returned home and the boy asked where his father was. She explained to her son about the dream.

Now Xowalaci told his friend that the woman was home, and that night the woman wanted her husband badly. When the door opened she saw the man of her dreams. The first family was together. The family had many children, who spoke different languages and formed the different tribes. Finally, Xowalaci left for the heavens, and the people stayed here.

***

A sense of the imperfection of creation—especially of the human element in creation—pervades this myth, so much so that the creator seems not so much godlike as one of us. In keeping with his human aspect, the creator acts as a culture hero, teaching the people how to live before departing to leave them to their own devices.

See Also: Clay-based Creation, Culture Heroes in Creation, Deus Otiosus or Absconditus in Creation, **Earth-Diver Creation**, Imperfect or Accidental Creation, Sexual Impulse in Creation.

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KAGABA

Not to be confused with the people of Kagaba Village in the Congo, the Kagaba are an indigenous tribe of present day Colombia in South America. The Kagaba creation myth is ex nihilo and features a semi-abstract Great Mother figure who represents the fecundity of Earth itself.

***

The Great Mother who bore us in the beginning is the mother of all that is. She made our songs, our seed, our nations. She is the mother of thunder, the mother of trees, the mother of all that grows and lives. She is the mother of the old stone-people and the mother of the young people, the French. She gave us the dances and the temples. When we sow the fields we say the Our Mother prayer: "Our mother of the growing fields, our mother of the streams, will have pity upon us. For whom do we belong? Whose seeds are we? To our mother alone do we belong."

***

This myths expresses a sense of the universe that is earth-centered rather than metaphysical. The people dream culturally of Earth as a living, nurturing entity in a purely local context.

See Also: **Ex Nihilo Creation**, Goddess as Creator

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KAKADU

Kakadu is the general name applied to the aboriginal groups living in the area of the great Kakadu National Park in northern Australia, a park containing cave and rock art illustrating the mythology of peoples who have lived in the area for perhaps as long as 50,000 years. As in all Australian aboriginal myths, we find the theme of creation from chaos—more specifically, cosmos from chaos through a creative walkabout and the mysterious dreaming of the particular world of the people in question, complete with specific landmarks. In this myth a feminine power—the Great Mother, Imberombera—rather than the masculine power—takes the primary role in the creative dreaming process.

***

The giant Wuraka walked through the western sea and came to Allukaladi between the Roe and Bidwell mountains, which he made. Then he moved on to other places in our land. Meanwhile, Imberombera also arrived from the sea at Malay Bay or Wungaran. She met up with Wuraka and asked him where he was going. He said he was heading through the bush to the rising sun in the east. To speak to each other they used the language of the people of Port Essington. Wuraka carried his enormous penis over his shoulder, and it made him so tired that he sat down to rest rather than going along with Imberombera as she suggested. Where he rested, Tor Rock rose up. As for Imberombera, her belly was full of children, and she carried bags of yams and a large stick. At Marpur, near Wuraka's resting spot, she planted yams and left some spirit children who spoke Iwaidja. She went on to many places, leaving spirit children and different languages.

***

As in many of the world's creation myths, the male principle's role seems to be primarily that of planting the seed of creation in the mother. In this case that role is emphasized by the too-heavy penis that presumably serves its purpose before causing the male principle to retire from the creative process.

See Also: Ancestors in Creation, Australian Aborigine, **Creation from Chaos**, Dreaming as Creation, Etiological Creation Myths, Goddess as Creator, Sexual Impulse in Creation.

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Keres. *See* Acoma (Aa'ku); Laguna (Kawaik); Zia

KIKUYU

The Kikuyu were originally a Bantu-speaking tribe that is said to have migrated to southern Africa from the Lake Chad area and then, in about 1000 C.E., to the foothills of Mount Kenya in

present-day Kenya. They settled along hill ridges and consider Mount Kenya a sacred place and the home of a protective deity.

***

The supreme deity, Ngai, created the world and made Mount Kenya, from which he could observe his creation. He created the father of the Kikuyu, Gikuyu, and sent him to a beautiful place full of wild fig trees. He explained to Gikuyu that if he ever needed his help he should perform certain animal sacrifices. Then he went away.

When Gikuyu arrived at the beautiful land he discovered there a beautiful woman, Mumbi ("one who creates"), and he married her. Soon they had nine daughters (some say 10). Gikuyu asked Ngai for sons to marry his daughters. The god told Gikuyu to sacrifice a lamb and a kid and pour out their blood on a special fig tree. Nine fine men came out of the ground. Some say that the nine women brought sticks that matched their heights, that these sticks were used for a sacrificial fire and that the nine men emerged from the fire. The nine men married the nine women and formed the nine Kikuyu clans.

***

This Kikuyu myth is much more concerned with the creation of the Kikuyu people than it is with the larger issues of cosmology and the creation of the world. It is also notable for its de facto monotheistic vision of Ngai, a deity who has no divine family and who lives in the sky, only visiting Earth from time to time. The central figure here is the ancestor-culture hero Gikuyu.

See Also: Ancestors in Creation, Animals in Creation, Culture Heroes in Creation, Deus Otiosus or Absconditus in Creation, **Ex Nihilo Creation**, Sacrifice in Creation, Sexual Impulse in Creation.

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KIOWA

The Kiowa people live in southwestern Oklahoma. Their myth is a somewhat unique emergence myth. According to this version of their creation myth, based on a retelling by N. Scott Momaday, it is said that the Kiowa emerged into this world long ago through a hollow log, far north of their present home, and that a pregnant woman got stuck in the log, blocking the way for others.

***

The Kiowa came into the present world by way of a hollow log. The Kiowa are a small tribe because a pregnant woman got caught in the log, preventing more people from coming through. The tribe became smaller still when two chiefs fought over the udders of an antelope that had been killed in a hunt. Furious, one of the chiefs took his people away and they have never been heard from since. There are spoken of as the Azatanhop—the "udder-angry travelers."

In the early days there were no horses and the Kiowa used dogs to help them carry things. Dogs could talk then. There was a wandering man who had been exiled from the people. He wounded a bear who ran off. A dog came up to him and warned him that enemies were on the way but that if he would feed her puppies she would save him. The man agreed, and the dog led him to safety.

The man went to live in the mountains, where they told of a couple who had a beautiful baby who climbed out of her cradle, which was hanging in a tree, and followed a redbird up the tree, which grew and grew until it reached the sky. By then the baby was a beautiful woman. She was greeted by a handsome man who was, in fact, the sun. The woman and the sun married.

But the woman missed her people, and one day, after a fight with her husband, she dug a hole under a bush that her husband had warned her never to go near. Through the hole she could see her people on the earth below. She made a rope and, with her baby son on her back, she started to make her way back to Earth. The rope was not long enough, however, and when her husband, the sun, discovered her she was hanging far above the earth. Furious, the sun sent a ring down the rope to kill his wife. Somehow the sun's son made it safely to the earth carrying the ring that had killed his mother. On Earth he was captured by a spider, known by some as Spider Grandmother.

Spider Grandmother warned the boy never to throw the ring into the sky, so, of course, that is exactly what he did. The ring fell onto his head and broke him in two, forming now two boys—twins in fact. The twins fought and destroyed various monsters and enemies and taught the Kiowa many things.

***

In this retelling of Scott Momaday's rich version of a Kiowa creation myth, we find several familiar Native American elements with original twists. The familiar emergence creation takes place in a hollow log, and the Kiowa population is limited by a blockage caused by a pregnant woman. The effect of this is to remind us of the birth metaphor inherent in the emergence theme. Ancient tribal divisions are explained by the myth of the fight over antelope udders. The descent of the sky woman theme is reminiscent of the Iroquoian myths of that theme associated with earth-diver creation myths. The aborted descent here is used to explain the presence of the culture hero twins so important to the teaching of Kiowa ways.

See Also: Animals in Creation, Culture Heroes in Creation, **Earth-Diver Creation**, **Emergence Creation**, Sexual Impulse in Creation, Sky Woman Descends, Sun in Creation, Twins in Creation.

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KODIAK

This creation from chaos myth with animistic world parent aspects of Kodiak Island in Alaska is one of the many Eskimo Raven creations. It contains the excretory aspects so common to trickster stories.

***

Raven brought light from the sky, and at the same time a bladder, containing a man and a woman, came down. By pushing and stretching it, the man and woman made the bladder into the world. By pushing with their hands and feet, they made mountains. Trees came into being when the man scattered his hair about. The woman urinated and spit to make the oceans, lakes, rivers, and ponds. The man made a knife out of one of the woman's teeth and cut some wood to make woodchips, which he then threw into the water to make fish. The man and the woman had a son, who played with a stone that became an island. They left another son on that island with a female dog that became his wife. These were the ancestors of the Kodiak people.

***

A kind of bestiality—intimate union between animal and human—frequently exists in the myths of the far north, perhaps expressing the necessary closeness between animals and humans in the harsh struggle for survival there.

See Also: Ancestors in Creation, Animals in Creation, Animistic Creation, Bodily Waste or Fluids as Creation Source, **Creation from Chaos**, Oqomiut, Raven in Creation, Trickster in Creation, **World Parent Creation**.

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KOKOWARRA

The Kokowarra are an Australian Aboriginal people of the Charlotte Bay region of Queensland. Traces of their existence there go back many thousands of years. Their creation myth is somewhat different from the dreamings of most of the other Aborigines.

***

Once there was a huge black giant, Anjir. Anjir had—even for a giant—an enormous bottom. But his bottom had no opening. One day while Anjir was asleep, a spirit called Jalpan emerged from the woods and used a piece of quartz to bore a hole into the giant's bottom. Out of that hole came a dark mass, which immediately became the dark Kokowarra people. The giant felt great relief and wandered off to another place where he eventually died.

***

This disturbing myth becomes more tolerable when compared to other creation myths, such as the Raven myths of the Chukchee and Kodiak peoples, involving the use of bodily fluids and waste. Although we modern readers might consider the myth to be racist or grotesque, we must recognize that it is a logical metaphor for the idea that the people emerged in the beginning from the body of a divine being. Technically the myth is a creation from chaos myth, as the people exist as a mass of material within the giant until they are released by the wood spirit to become recognizable as humans. In a sense, the giant is the birth-giver of the people, making this also a world parent creation myth. Since the people emerge from a hole as the source of their existence, it is also an emergence myth, albeit, an odd one.

See Also: Bodily Waste or Fluids as Creation Source, **Creation from Chaos**, **Emergence Creation**, **World Parent Creation**.

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KONO

The Kono people came from Mali and Guinea long ago to what is now Sierra Leone. The Kono creation myth is unique in that it tells how Death existed before anything else. Death, then, is the primary Kono Creator. It is notable, however, that the god Alatangana improved on Death's creation. Still, Death would demand a price for the improvement of the human lot.

***

Once there was only darkness, and Sa (Death) lived there with his wife and daughter. Sa wanted something more stable, so he used his magic to make a slushy kind of mud sea as a place to live. The god Alatangana suddenly appeared—where from, we do not know—and visited Sa. Alatangana was disgusted by Sa's lifestyle and told him so. He decided to do better than Sa had done.

Alatangana first made the slush solid and added animals and plants to it to make it more lively. Sa was pleased, and he offered friendship to the god and entertained him. When Alatangana asked Sa for his daughter's hand in marriage, however, he refused.

Alatangana met the girl secretly, and they eloped to a distant place to avoid the anger of Sa. There they produced 14 children: four white boys, four white girls, three black boys, and three black girls. The children all spoke different languages, and their parents could not understand them. This was so upsetting to Alatangana and his wife that the god decided he would have to consult his father-in-law, Sa.

Alatangana went to Sa and asked his advice. Sa was not pleased with his son-in-law, who had eloped with his only daughter, and he admitted that it had been he who had punished the disobedient couple by making it impossible for them to understand their own children. "Still," he said, "I will give your white children intelligence and the ability to write, so that they can write down what they want to say. I will give your black children tools so that they may feed and shelter themselves. But the black children must marry only black people and the white children only whites."

Alatangana agreed to his father-in-law's rules, and so began the black and white races and their separation. The people scattered over the world. The world was still covered in darkness, though, so Alatangana had to once again get help from Sa, who told two birds how to sing in a way that would bring light.

These birds, the tou-tou and the cock, became morning birds, whose songs do indeed bring light. The light came from the sun, whose course Sa had fixed. He also arranged the moon and stars for night light.

Then Sa called Alatangana to him and demanded a service in return for the gifts

he had given. "You have stolen my only child," he said. "Now you must give me one of yours whenever I wish it. When I wish to call one of your children I must never be denied. You will know I have called by the sound of the calabash rattle in your dream." So it was that death for us humans was the bride-price for Alatangana's marriage.

***

The aspect of this strange cultural dream that stands out most prominently for a modern audience is the division of the races and the apparent justification in the context of creation itself of the inferior role of blacks. It seems likely that colonialism affected the development of this myth.

See Also: **Creation from Chaos**, **Ex Nihilo Creation**, Sexual Impulse in Creation, Two Creators Motif.

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KOOTENAY (KUTANAI, KTUNAXA)

The Kootenay live in parts of British Columbia, Idaho, and Montana. Their origin and their language family are unclear. One tradition holds that long ago they broke away from a Blackfoot tribe and gradually developed their own traditions.

The Kootenay say that the trickster, Coyote, was the creator of the world—that he created the sun, for instance, out of a ball of grease. There is a later story that suggests that humans were created by various animals and birds, and that particular animals acted as culture heroes, teaching the new people how to live.

The closeness between humans and their animal teachers is important here, as always in Native American myths because it points back to a better time when the various species were closer in spirit and understanding and totem animals reigned supreme. There is, of course, a slightly comic or at least somewhat mundanely domestic aspect suggested by Coyote's creating the sun out of a ball of grease.

See Also: Animals in Creation, Coyote in Creation, Culture Heroes in Creation, **Ex Nihilo Creation**, Trickster in Creation.

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KOREAN

The indigenous pre-Buddhist, pre-Confucian, pre-Daoist, and pre-Christian religion of the Korean peninsula seems to have been shamanistic in nature. At the center of the religious rituals were women called *mudang,* who communicated with deities and ancestors and told fortunes. They were also knowledgeable about the afterlife. The religion of the *mudang* was polytheistic and somewhat animistic. There were several mountain gods, an earth god, and figures called Dragon King God, Good Luck God, Kitchen God, Childbirth God, and even Smallpox God. And there were—and often still are—gods for nearly every part of the house—such as toilet gods, house

beam gods, and chimney gods. There were ancient myths of creation and heroes that seem to have owed something to Chinese mythology.

An ancient Korean legend concerns itself specifically with the creation of humans in relation to a particular land; Korea.

***

In the beginning in Heaven there was Hwan-ung, the son of the high god, Hwan-in. Hwan-ung wanted to live in the earth below, so his father sent him to Mount T'aebaeksan, between Manchuria and what is now Korea, with 3000 helpers. He named the place Shinshi (the City of God). Once there, Hwan-ung acted as a culture hero, teaching the people how to live.

***

There is also a story of a bear living in a cave, who wanted desperately to become human. Hwan-ung heard the bear's prayers and gave him garlic and mugwort and ordered him to eat this food and to remain hidden in the cave for 100 days. After the 100 days, the bear became a woman and Hwan-ung became her husband. Before long the bear-woman gave birth to Tan-gun (Dan'gun), the first king of the Choson Kingdom, with its capital in what is now P'yongyang. At the age of 1908, after many centuries of glorious rule, Tan-gun retired to Mount T'aebaaeksan as a god.

***

Still another story concerns the hero, Cumong, known as the "good archer," as the Chinese Yi was also known. The story tells us that after a crack appeared in Chaos so that the sky and earth could be separated, the archer shot down one of two suns and one of two moons before humans were made from earth.

In its emphasis on a specific land, Korean myth resembles that of Japan. Furthermore, the Korean myth, like the Chinese creation myths, serves as a quasi-history of the origins of the kings of Korea.

See Also: Ancestors in Creation, Animals in Creation, **Creation from Chaos**, Culture Heroes in Creation, Separation of Heaven and Earth in Creation.

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KRACHI

The Krachi people of Togo and Ghana tell a world parent creation myth that includes the Fall with elements of the separation of the primordial unity between Earth and Heaven.

***

In the beginning Wulbari (Heaven—male) lived on top of Asase Ya (Earth—female). Man lived between them, but with little room to move. Man's squirming irritated Wulbari so much that he left and went up above.

One of the things that bothered Wulbari was an old woman who, when grinding maize, kept hitting him with her pestle, and the smoke from the cooking fires bothered his eyes. Some say that Wulbari was annoyed because men

would sometimes wipe their dirty hands on him. The Krachi people say that there was an old woman who used to cut off bits of Wulbari to flavor her soup.

It is said that the Krachi people originated when Wulbari sent down a group of men and another of women and the men, after a time, decided to go to the women to mate with them.

When death came to the Krachi in the form of a human-flesh-eating giant bird, Wulbari gave the dog a medicine to cure his appointed people, the humans. But the dog put the medicine down to eat a bone, and it was picked up by the goat, whose appointed people was grass. So grass got the medicine and comes back every year, whereas people simply die.

***

This myth reveals a certain pessimism about the nature of existence and indicates a preoccupation with death as a defining aspect of human life.

See Also: Animals in Creation, Death Origin in Creation, Etiological Creation Myts, Fall from Grace in Creation, Separation of Heaven and Earth in Creation, **World Parent Creation**.

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KUKULIK

The people of the village of Kukulik (Savoonga) on St. Lawrence Island in the Bering Sea west of Alaska have a creation myth centering on the familiar north coast trickster-creator, Raven.

***

Raven first made the Unisak Cape shoreline, then the Russian part of the world, then the American. He rested for a bit and then, in earth-diver fashion, reached down into the deep water for some sand. He squeezed the water out of the sand and made the village of Cibukak (Wrung Out) from it. Out of the pebbles in the sand he made the people, and he told them how to pick seaweed and hunt sea animals and fish.

One day a man decided to travel to the Sun to ask him for reindeer for the people. Sun refused, but he did give the man certain pebbles, which he said should be thrown into the water. The man did as he was told, and when the stones hit the water they became whales. The Kukulik Eskimos are still whalers.

***

The primary purpose of this myth would seem to be an explanation for the primary occupation of the Kukulik.

See Also: Animals in Creation, **Earth-Diver Creation**, **Ex Nihilo Creation**, Haida, Kodiak, Nugumuit, Oqomuit, Raven in Creation, Sun in Creation, Trickster in Creation.

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LAGUNA (KAWAIK)

The Keresan-speaking Laguna (Kawaik) people live in a pueblo near Acoma in what is today western New Mexico. Like the myths of other pueblo peoples, the

Laguna creation is an emergence story. It also has ex nihilo and creation by thought characteristics. The major role in the myth is played by the goddess figure, Thinking Woman (Tse che nako, Ts'its'tsi'nako, or Old Spider Woman). The Laguna myth shares many aspects with the Acoma myth, in which the goddess and her two daughters are central.

***

In the beginning Thinking Woman made everything, even thoughts and the names of things. Then her children (some say sisters), the girl twins Uretsete and Naotsete, made more names and thoughts.

Whatever Thinking Woman, the Spider Woman, thought and named became real, including the girl twins, who helped her create this world and the underworlds from which the people gradually emerged in ancient times.

***

This myth is so close to the myth of the neighboring Keresan-speaking Acoma people that the reader can with confidence turn to the Acoma myth for more story details.

See Also: Acoma (Aa'ku), Animals in Creation, **Emergence Creation**, **Ex Nihilo Creation**, Goddess as Creator, Thought-based Creation, Twins in Creation.

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Lakota. *See* Sioux

LAO

The Laos people of present day Laos in southeast Asia are descended from the Wenda Laos, a branch of the Tai group originally from South China and northern Vietnam. A narrative, the *Nithan Khun Borom*, contains a mythological description of the origin of the Laos.

***

An argument among the gods resulted in a great Flood, which left only three giant gourds remaining on the earth. Noises emanated from the gourds, so the gods broke them and animals of all kinds emerged. Various peoples also came out—both black Kha people and light-skinned Tai Lao people. The gods tried



Temple relief carving depicting the Hindu god Indra, the king of the gods and the god of rain, who takes the form of an eagle to kill the serpent Vitra. Sculptures that decorate temples reached their pinnacle in elaboration during the Hoysala period. (© Lindsay Hebberd/CORBIS)

to teach the people proper ways of living, but the people were arrogant and unruly, so the chief god, Indra, sent his son Khun Borom, also called *Parama* (the "Lord") to settle matters. Khun Borom landed from the heavens in a rice paddy and began to organize things. With Khun Borom were the Lao ancestors, the Pu Ngoe Nga Ngoe, called Pu Thao Yoe (or Pu Yoe Ya Yoe) and Me Ya Ngam. Khun Borom had seven sons and he divided the land into seven areas that included parts of China, Vietnam, Thailand, Burma, and all of Laos (Lan Xang).

***

The gourds in this creation from chaos myth are, in effect, cosmic eggs. Figures from this myth still participate in Laotian festivals. It is of interest that, as is the case in neighboring Cambodia and elsewhere in southeast Asia, there is an influence of Hinduism; Indra, for instance, being a Hindu god.

See Also: Ancestors in Creation, Cosmic Egg in Creation, **Creation from Chaos**, Culture Heroes in Creation, Flood in Creation Myths.

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LAPP (SAMI)

The Lapp, or Sami people have lived in northern Europe for at least 2500 years. Their homeland, known as Sápmi, is made up of parts of Sweden, Norway, Russia, and Finland. Sami languages are of the Finno-Ugric family. Famous for their reindeer, these people of the "Land of the Midnight Sun" tell a creation story that, not surprisingly, is part of an epic titled *Son of the Sun*, from which an excerpt, dealing with the world parent creation of the Gállá-bártnit, ancestors of the Sami, is retold below.

***

In the beginning there were only Sun and Earth. As world father and world mother, they created everything in the world. But it was their son—the Son of the Sun, who was responsible for the creation of humans. The home of the Son of the Sun lacked females, so the Son set out with select friends on a boat in search of a mate in a land of giants, west of the Sun. Soon after his arrival there, the Son met the beautiful daughter of the ancient blind giant king. After defeating the king in a finger-pulling match, he has intercourse with the daughter and then takes her away in his boat. Followed by the maiden's angry brothers, the couple save themselves with the girl's magic handkerchief and the Son's violently hot sun rays. The couple marry and soon the wife gives birth to the Sami ancestors who ascend to the heavens as stars.

***

The Lapp myth of the creation of humans contains many elements that will be familiar to readers of the Greek myth of Jason and Medea. In that myth, Jason and his Argonauts (companions of his boat, the Argo) arrive at a mysterious land, defeat the king by trickery, and escape with the king's daughter, who

uses magic to fight off her pursuing brothers.

As in the creation myths of their linguistic relatives, the Hungarians and Finns, the sun, so important in the Arctic north, plays a significant role as a creator.

See Also: Ancestors in Creation, Finnish (Finno-Ugric), Hungarian (Magyar), Sexual Impulse in Creation, Sun in Creation, **World Parent Creation**.

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LENAPE (DELAWARE)

An Algonquian-speaking tribe, the Lenape ("the People") were called the Delaware by European settlers because their settlements tended to border the Delaware River. A Lenape creation myth is included in a written work known as the *Walam Olum* (Red Book or Red Source), which has long been the center of a controversy. Those who support the work's veracity say it is a 19th century translation of ancient pictographs. Others have dismissed it as quite simply a hoax. Many Lenape say that whether the *Walum Olum* is a hoax or not, it contains many true aspects of a Lenape creation myth. Much of the ex nihilo myth retold here is based on the *Walam Olum.*

The story has familiar native American elements, especially the earth-diver aspect, the twins, and the culture hero aspect, and it contains many universal creation motifs, which may or may not have derived from European translators.

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In the beginning there was only empty space. In that space the creator, Kishelamakank, lived. The creator was possessed by a vision of a world, with lakes, rivers, and mountains, forests and plants, and animals of all kinds, a world where there were emotions and wonderful experiences. To make the vision come to life, the creator thought about each of its elements, and these elements gradually began to take form.

To help him with his creation, Kishelamakank created the great spirits of Rock, Fire, Wind, and Water who were also spirits of the four directions. Northern Grandfather, Muxumsa Lowanewank, was Spirit of the Rock. His role in creation was to provide solidity to the Creator's vision. He is winter, but he is also responsible for all of the physical things in our world. Eastern Grandfather, Muxumsa Wapanewank, is spring and wind. He is the provider of mental powers, light, and creativity. Southern Grandmother, Homa Shawanewank, is summer and the Fire that is the sun. It is she who gives us Spirit and the possibility of inner growth and energy. Finally, Muxumsa Wunchenewank, Western Grandfather, is the great water spirit. He is fall and rain and he is death, but he is also renewal and the water—blood—that gives us life.

The creator was helped further by Father Sun, who gave warmth and light, by Mother Moon, who brought fertility, and by Mother Earth, who served as the vehicle for life itself.

All kinds of things now came into full being: plants, trees, crops, animals of all kinds—all living in harmony.

Our Grandmother Moon, Nipahuma, feeling lonely, asked the creator for a

husband and the Creator sent Thunder, Muxumsa Pethakowe, with whose help Grandmother Moon conceived and then gave birth on Earth to the Twins—the first humans, a man and a woman—who used their opposite natures to reproduce and who were always watched over at night by their Grandmother Moon.

There were many opposites in creation, because the Creator had seen opposites in his original vision. So darkness opposed light, male was balanced by female, and because the spirit Manatu opposed the Creator, evil worked against good. This was Manatu, who made evil to counter goodness; poisonous animals and plants to undermine useful animals and plants.

The Creator now made the Great Toad, the spirit Kichichax'kal, to live on Earth and to be in charge of balancing the waters. But the Toad was challenged and ultimately defeated by the evil horned serpent, Maxa'xak. The Earth became a place of turmoil, so the Creator sent a great flood to cleanse his creation.

But there was a good surviving spirit, Nanapush, who placed a few humans and animals in his shirt and climbed a cedar tree on top of a mountain to avoid the waters. He then made a raft of the cedar branches and he and his fellow survivors floated on the raft. When the rains stopped, Nanapush decided to make use of powers given him by the Creator to create a new world. He sent various animals into the depths of the water that covered the old world to find soil for a new world. Various animals tried and failed in their dive. Finally, the muskrat succeeded and brought up soil in his paws. Nanapush placed that soil on the back of Taxkwax, the Turtle, and the Earth immediately began to grow into the world we know, the world we call Turtle Island.

Nanapush breathed life into the new elements that formed on the new Earth.

A fine tree grew from Mother Earth and the first new man grew from a root of the tree. When the tree kissed Mother Earth, she sent a woman to be with the man. These were the first ancestors of the Lenape. Nanapush taught these Lenape how to live properly and then he turned himself into a rabbit and left for the spirit world.

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The presence in this myth of many elements common to the myths of other Algonquian-speaking peoples, such as, for instance, the Anishinabe, supports the possibility of at least some authenticity in connection with this creation story. The earth-diver process and the success of unlikely animals such as the little muskrat are common eastern Native American themes, as is the presence of Nanapush. Nanapush is a spelling of Nanabush, another name for a popular Algonquian culture hero, also known as Nanabozho.

To be sure, the flood theme and theme of a devil spirit in opposition to the creator are central to the Judeo-Christian creation story, and it is possible that the final version of the Lenape myth was influenced by that story. However, the flood and extreme duality in the universe are found as well in myths in all corners of the world.

See Also: Ancestors in Creation, Animals in Creation, Anishinabe (Ojibwe, Chippewa), Arapaho, Bloods, Cherokee (Tsalagi), Cul-

ture Heroes in Creation, Devil in Creation, Duality in Creation, **Earth-Diver Creation**, **Ex Nihilo Creation**, Fall from Grace in Creation, Flood in Creation Myths, Four Directions in Creation, Sexual Impulse in Creation, Sun in Creation, Thought-based Creation, Twins in Creation, Two Creators Motif.

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LUGBARA

The Lugbara are a large tribe in the West Nile region of Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The Lugbara live in small clan groups and place a high premium on lineage.

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The people are all of one blood. The creator, Adronga 'ba o'bapiri, made this blood ex nihilo for the first two creatures he placed here. These were Gborogboro (Sky Person—male) and Meme (Big Body-female). Meme was full of wild animals, who sprang from her womb. Gborogboro and Meme, a form of Heaven and Earth, were married. After Meme gave birth to the animals, the creator placed children in her womb, or, as some say, the pair coupled and children were conceived—a boy and a girl. This boy and girl made another male and female pair, and that pair did the same.

It is said by some that the various brother-sister pairs never copulated but that the women became pregnant when goat's blood was poured onto their legs. People also say that eventually humans and the creator were separated and that the people, although carrying the same blood, were separated into black and white.

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The motivation behind this myth would seem to be the question of pure blood lines, even in the face of the taboo of incest.

See Also: Animals in Creation, **Ex Nihilo Creation**, Incest in Creation.

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LUISEÑO

The Luiseño people of the southern California coast are the southernmost group of the Shoshoneans, who were once powerful in Utah, Nevada, Utah, and California. Hunter/gatherers who spoke at Uto-Aztecan language, these Native Americans, like all others in the area, came under the influence of Spanish missions. Some of the Temecula Valley-based Pechanga band of the Luiseño tell a complex creation story that contains many familiar motifs, beginning with creation from chaos and including a world parent aspect. It is a story that shares similarities with the Hawaiian myth of the gradual coming of light.

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In the beginning there was only Kevish-Atakvish (space void) or Omai-

Yamal (nothingness). Then things began to fall into forms. Time came, and the Milky Way. There was no light yet, but there was a creative stirring. Kevish-Atakvish made a man, Tukmit, who was the sky, and a woman, Tomaiyovit, who was the earth. They could not see each other, but brother and sister knew each other and they conceived and gave birth to the first elements of creation. They produced the valleys, mountains, stones, streams, and all things that would be necessary for worship, ceremonies, and cooking. From the earth came Takwish, the terrifying meteor, and his son, Towish, who is the immortal soul of humans. Wiyot also came forth, and from Wiyot came the people. It was still dark.

The Earth Mother made a sun, but it was too bright and had to be hidden away since it frightened the people. The people made more people and they followed the growing Earth as it stretched southward. They came to Temecula, where the Earth Mother brought out the sun again. The people raised it up to the sky, where it followed a regular path and was not so frightening.

At Temecula, it is said by some, the father of the people, Wiyot, died. Because Frog hated him for the legs he had made for her, she spit poison into his water. After drinking the poison, Wiyot announced that he would die in the spring. Before he left, he taught the people what they needed to know. When he died, a great oak tree grew from his ashes, an axis mundi for the people.

Now Wiyot visits the people each night; he has become the moon and is the center of their celebrations: "Wiyot rises," the people cry as they dance for him.

***

The figure of Wiyot, a name perhaps borrowed for this story from the Wiyot Indians further north, would seem to be a post-Christianization addition, not always present in the Luiseño story. As a god-like figure who acts as a culture hero, dies, and is reborn as a tree (perhaps a type of the Christian cross as tree), Wiyot brings to mind Jesus.

See Also: Axis Mundi in Creation, **Creation from Chaos**, Culture Heroes in Creation, **Ex Nihilo Creation**, Incest in Creation, Sexual Impulse in Creation, Ute, **World Parent Creation**.

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MAASAI

A semi-nomadic people numbering some 400,000, the Maasai live near the great game parks of Kenya and Tanzania. Theirs is a strict patriarchal culture with a set of religious laws governing various aspects of life. A central figure in Maasai society is the *laibon,* the shaman-healer who is an arbiter of the patriarchal moral law.

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Enkai is the creator of the world. Eventually he created the first humans out of a tree. He split the tree into three parts. One part became the Maasai father. The other two became the Kikuyu and Kamba fathers. To the Maasai father the god gave a stick for animal herding.

To the Kikuyu he gave a hoe for agriculture, and to the Kamba he have a bow and arrow for hunting.

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In a different version of the Maasai creation, there are two creators; a black god and a red god who become involved in a power struggle in which the black god is victorious.

Their Maasai religion, like that of the Kikuyu, is monotheistic. Their god, Enkai, has two distinct natures, however. He can be nurturing or vengeful. The emphasis in the creation myth is on the patriarchal arrangement between a father god and father ancestors of the people, reflecting the strict patriarchal nature of the culture.

See Also: Ancestors in Creation, Duality in Creation, **Ex Nihilo Creation**, Father Creators, Two Creators Motif.

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Madagascar. *See* Malagasy

MAIDU

The Maidu Indian lived in a large area east of the Sacramento River into the Sierra Nevada Mountains. There are many Maidu creation and origin myths. They all contain a dominant creator-like figure, Earth-Starter or Great Man, for instance.

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One myth says that Great Man alone lived on a then-molten Earth but desired something more. When Earth cooled, he created a woman and together they produced the people. A group of Maidu near the Sacramento River believed that a great flood overcame the land, leaving only two survivors, the primal parents of the Maidu, who were blessed by the Great Man.

***

A much more complex myth, one marked by baptismal-like cleansings and re-creations, provided a basis for Maidu rituals. The creator here is Earth-Starter. Earth-Starter is assisted in his earth-diver creation by the diving of Turtle and the apparent chanting (shouting) of Father of the Secret Society, who appears to be shamanic. We also find in this myth the familiar disruptive figure of the trickster, Coyote.

***

In the beginning there was no light, and everywhere there was water. From the north a raft came carrying Turtle and Pehe-ipe (Father of the Secret Society). A feather rope was let down from the sky. Earth-Starter came down the rope, tied it to the bow of the raft, and climbed aboard. His face was masked and he shone as if he were the sun itself; he sat still and was quiet.

"Where did you come from?" Turtle asked.

"From up there," said Earth-Starter.

"It would be nice if you could make me some dry land to stand on once in a while," said Turtle. "And, by the way, are there going to be people on the earth?"

"Yes," answered Earth-Starter.

"When?"

"I can't say. But if you want land I will need some earth."

Turtle said he would dive for some. Earth-Starter tied a rock around Turtle's arm. He then took a feather rope out of the blue and tied it around Turtle's leg.

"Good," said Turtle. "If the rope is not long enough I'll jerk once. If it is long enough I'll jerk twice and you must pull me up." Then he dove over the side as Father of the Secret Society shouted.

Turtle did not come up for six years, and when he did he was covered in slime and had only a bit of earth under his nails. Earth-Starter took a stone knife from under his armpit and scraped the bit of earth from Turtle's nails. He rolled it in his hands and placed it on the stern of the raft. Gradually the little ball grew until it was as big as the world and had grounded the raft at Ta'doiko-o.

"This is fine," said Turtle, "but we need light; can you make some?"

Well," said Earth-Starter, "let's see. Come out onto the raft and I will call my sister from the east."

The light began to rise, and Father of the Secret Society shouted again. Earth-Starter made a path for his sister, Sun, and after a while she went down at the other end. Father of the Secret Society was upset, so Earth-Starter called his brother, Moon, and he came up and all was well.

"Will you do nothing else?" asked Turtle.

"Oh, yes," answered Earth-Starter, and he called out the stars by name and made the huge Hu'kimtsa (oak) tree to grow at Ta'doiko-o, an axis mundi. They all sat under it for two days.

Then they went off to look at Earth-Starter's new world. Earth-Starter went so fast, however, that the others could only see a ball of fire flashing under the ground and in the water.

Meanwhile, back at Ta'doiko-o, Coyote and his dog, Rattlesnake, came up out of the ground. Some people say that only Coyote could see through Earth-Starter's mask to his face. All five beings now built huts for themselves, but it was forbidden to go into Earth-Starter's hut.

For some time Earth-Starter made other things—birds, trees, and deer. Sometimes Turtle complained about Earth-Starter's style and methods.

One day Earth-Starter and Coyote were at Marysville Buttes when suddenly Earth-Starter announced that he would make people. He took red clay from the earth and made a man and a woman. He laid them next to each other inside his house, where no one else had been allowed to go. Then Earth-Starter lay down next to the two new beings. He stretched out his arms and sweated for at least a day and night until early in the morning, when the new woman tickled him. He did not laugh, but got up and struck the ground with pitch wood so that a fire came. The new people were as white as snow and had pink eyes and black hair. Earth-Starter finished by giving the people hands like his so they could climb trees to escape bears. These first people were the man, Ku'ksu, and Morning Star Woman.

Now Coyote thought he would have a try at creating people, since Earth-Starter had explained to him how it was done. In the morning, however, when the woman he created tickled him, he laughed—something Earth-Starter had told him not to do. As a result, these new people had glassy eyes and did not come alive. "I told you not to laugh," said Earth-Starter, and Coyote said he had not. This was his first great lie.

Soon there were many people. Earth-Starter did not stay around as much as he had before, but he did sometimes speak to the first man, Ku'ksu, during the night. One night he ordered him to gather the people the next day and take them to the little lake nearby. He said that Ku'ksu would be an old man by the time he got there.

Ku'ksu did as he was told, and when the people got to the lake he was an old man. He fell into the lake and sank into it. There was a terrible roaring sound and earth-shaking until Ku'ksu came out of the water as a young man. Then Earth-Starter spoke to the people and told them that when they got old they must do as Ku'ksu had done and all would be well. After he had spoken, Earth-Starter returned to his place above.

The world that Earth-Starter had left was a perfect place. There was more than enough to eat. In fact, the women put out baskets at night and found them full of warm food in the morning.

Coyote introduced new ways, however, and everything changed. Some of the new ways were all right; there were games and races. The bad thing that Coyote introduced was death with the help of his dog, Rattlesnake.

It was up to Ku'ksu to teach the people how to treat the dead by wrapping them and burying them "until the world shall be made over." He then sent the people to different places, where they spoke different languages, and he went to the spirit house. Coyote tried to follow him there by killing himself, but by then Ku'ksu had gone above to where Earth-Starter is.

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What stands out in this myth is the sense of a lost paradise, brought about by one of the creator's assistants, Coyote, and the importance of rituals developed to counteract the evil effects of a compromised creation.

See Also: Animals in Creation, Axis Mundi in Creation, Clay-based Creation, Coyote in Creation, Death Origin in Creation, **Earth-Diver Creation**, Etiological Creation Myths, Father Creators, Flood in Creation Myths, Imperfect or Accidental Creation, Origin of Evil in Creation, Sexual Impulse in Creation, Trickster in Creation.

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MALAGASY

The Malagasy people of the Indian Ocean island of Madagascar off the Southeast coast of Africa have their origins in many Asian and African cultures. Their creation myth is notable for the presence of two creators—one for the physical world or body and one for the spiritual world or soul. This creation story is concerned

with the origin of humans rather than with more cosmic questions.

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One day the creator noticed his daughter making little clay dolls. He liked her dolls so much that he blew life into them and they became human beings.

The creator's daughter grew up and became the Earth Mother and her human dolls multiplied. The people loved the Earth Mother and worshipped her, and this made her father, the Creator, jealous. So it was that he decided that the souls of the people were his. Whenever he wished he took a person's soul and Earth Mother took the person's body back into herself.

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While there is division here between the roles of the two creators, the main purpose of the myth would seem to be an explanation for death.

See Also: Clay-based Creation, **Creation from Chaos**, Death Origin in Creation, Deus Faber Creation, Two Creators Motif.

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Mali. *See* Bambara; Dogon; Fulani; Mande

MALOZI (LOZI, ALYUI, BAROTSE)

The Malozi people of Western Zambia are led by an almost-sacred king, known as the Litunga, who performs ceremonies in the sacred center, Lealui. Theirs is an ex nihilo creation, but the primary emphasis in the myth is on the relationship between creator and humans after the actual creation. Like so many creation myths, this is the story of how humans fell from grace and did as they pleased with creation. It is a story of how they became separated from God and then built something like the Tower of Babel to try to get back to Him.

***

It was Nyambe who was first in the world, alone. He created Earth and lived there with his wife, Nasilele. He made the rivers, plains, animals, and the first people, Kamunu and Kamunu's wife. Kamunu learned quickly from Nyambe and was more intelligent than the other animals. He learned to carve and to forge iron. A time came when he went so far as to forge a spear and kill the son of the antelope, which he ate.

Nyambe was furious. "You have eaten one of my children," he said. "This was your own brother." He then sent Kamunu away. After a year, Kamunu came back with a club and a magic pot. This was reported to Nyambe, who allowed the man to stay.

Kamunu went to Nyambe, demanded fields to cultivate, and was given them. At night, however, the buffalo trampled the fields, so Kamunu killed one. Nyambe said he could eat it and he did.

Then Kamunu's magic pot died, and Nyambe said that was the way of the world.

When Kamunu killed a deer who trampled his fields he was allowed to eat it. The next day his dog died, but Nyambe was not concerned for him.

Kamunu now claimed that he had seen Nyambe with both his pot and his dog, but his wife did not believe him.

When Kamunu killed a trampling elephant, Nyambe said he could eat it. When he did, however, his child died. When Kamunu complained, Nyambe said "This is the way of the world."

Then Nyambe took his messenger and the antelope and went away from Kamunu to live on an island. Kamunu found Nyambe, built a canoe, and took animal offerings to him to eat. Nyambe was unhappy and would not receive the dead offerings. "These are all my children," he said.

Nyambe went to a mountain to escape the man, but Kamunu followed him there. Wherever Nyambe went on the earth he found Kamunu's children. Finally Nyambe found a safe place. He invited the animals to come with him to get away from the man and his children. They decided to stay, however, thinking they could use their speed, strength, and size to protect themselves. In the end, Nyambe went up on high. Still Kamunu tried to get to Nyambe. He built a tower of wooden posts tied with bark to try to get to Nyambe, but the tower fell from the weight of the climbers and many people died. Kamunu has given up trying to get to Nyambe, but every morning he prays to him when the sun, our king, comes up.

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This is a myth that emphasizes the differences between a creator who loves his creation and humans who find themselves in need and on a collision course with creation itself. We need to respect creation, but we need to eat, the myth seems to say. We need God, but we also need to use God's world. It is a myth that expresses a people's sense of an essential paradox in creation. In the face of that paradox God withdraws—unrealistically as far as humans are concerned—and they chase him. Finally, they can do no more than pray to him by was of his emissary, the Sun, whose earthly representative is their king, the Litunga.

See Also: Animals in Creation, Deus Otiosus or Absconditus in Creation, **Ex Nihilo Creation**, Fall from Grace in Creation, Sun in Creation, **World Parent Creation**.

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MANDAN

The Mandan, who probably originated in the eastern area of what became the United States, settled in North Dakota. They were ravished by diseases introduced by whites, and eventually all but died out. Their otherwise typical earth-diver creation myth is clearly influenced by the religion of Catholic missionaries who converted them in the 18th century. The figure of Lone Man is related to Christ, as is the world tree, the axis mundi that is at the center of Mandan ceremonies.

***

First there was water and darkness everywhere. There was the Creator and his companion, Lone Man. As they were walking about on the waters, the Creator and Lone Man met a small being that turned out to be a duck. They asked her how she managed to live, and she explained that she took sustenance from

something under the waters. Creator asked her to show him the food, and she dove to the depths and returned with sand.

The Creator and Lone Man decided to create land from the sand. Leaving some water between them—the Missouri River—they began creating. North of the river the Creator made lakes; northern animals like the elk, deer, and antelope; deep valleys; and high mountains. There was ample material for food and shelter for both humans and animals. Farther south, Lone Man made plains-like country with a few lakes and rivers, along with animals such as the beaver, muskrat, and cattle of different kinds.

Then the two discussed their creations. The Creator did not much like Lone Man's flat and somewhat forbidding landscape; it was not as suitable as his for providing food, clothing, and shelter. The Creator's animals seemed better adapted to the elements. Lone Man suggested that the people could make use of the Creator's superior creation first but that later his might become useful—and so it happened.

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The rest of the story tells how Lone Man entered the world of humans as a savior, teacher and culture hero.

The version that follows is based on a conversation in the 1920s between an old Mandan woman and ethnologist Martha Warren Beckwith (Beckwith 1).

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Lone Man saw that the humans he had created were doing well to a point, but he was upset by the evil spirits who were plaguing them, so he decided to live on Earth as a human being himself. Lone man needed a virgin to serve as his mother and chose one from a humble Mandan family. One day the young virgin was eating corn, so Lone Man became a kernel of corn, which the girl ate and promptly became pregnant. The girl's confused parents, noticing her pregnancy, questioned her. The girl denied ever having been with a man but remembered that she had felt something strange inside of her when she had recently eaten corn. The parents realized that the conception was something holy and miraculous.

Soon the virgin gave birth to a child who was perfect in all ways. As he grew up he was known as a peacemaker. He never married.

One day the people prepared for their annual boat trip to an island to collect a plant called ma-ta-ba-ho. The boat was magical in that it moved by itself without any rowing on the part of the 12 men who were assigned to make the voyage. The voyage was extremely dangerous and it was thought that any more than 12 men in the boat would bring bad luck. So when at the last moment the young man (in reality Lone Man) got into the boat, the 12 men already in the boat and the people on shore objected. Nevertheless, the young man insisted and the boat left the harbor. What followed was a series of attempts on the part of evil spirits to attack the boat. Some came out of the water and tried to capsize the boat. Some, disguised as willow trees along the shore, turned into youths who tried to wrestle with the men. In every case Lone Man fought the spirits and when a whirlpool attempted to swallow them, Lone Man stood up and reminded it that it was

he who had created it and the sea. Immediately the waters calmed down Many other evil attacks were made on the boat, but Lone Man always prevailed.

Finally the boat reached the island that was its goal. The chief there was an evil man named Ma-na-ge. Realizing what would happen, Lone Man put a bulrush into his mouth and through his digestive system so that anything he ate or drank would pass through him without being ingested. The chief ordered a great feast for the visitors and demanded that they eat it all. There was so much food that had they eaten it all they would have died. Lone Man ordered the men to eat only a little bit and to pass the rest on to him. He pretended to eat the food but actually disposed of it through the inserted bulrush.

Next Ma-na-ge offered the men a smoke, using tobacco that he was sure would kill them. Lone Men warned the men to take only light puffs and to pass the huge pipe along to him. He puffed on the pipe until all the tobacco was gone, but the smoke traveled in and out of his body byway of the bulrush and did no harm.

By now the islanders were suspicious that the mysterious 13th man must, in fact, be Lone Man. The chief ordered the men's bags to be filled with the ma-ta-ba-ho. He gave an impossibly heavy bag to the 13th man, who flung it easily over his shoulder. Now the chief exclaimed, "You must be Lone man." The chief then said he would visit the Mandans in four years time.

When they reached home, Lone Man told the people how to make ceremonies in his honor and how to protect themselves against the flood that the island chief would bring in an attempt to destroy them.

He told them to construct a round fortress in the center of the village. In the fortress they were to place a painted cedar tree, next to which they were to burn incense. "The cedar is my body," he told them. The cedar and the fortress would protect them from the flood that was to come.

After he had instructed them, Lone Man left, promising to return one day. When the evil chief arrived and attempted to flood the Mandans, the fortress and the sacred cedar of Lone Man protected them and the evil waters subsided.

***

In these myths, Lone Man takes his place in world mythology with those divine-like heroes who come in human form as saviors in times of dire need. His archetypal brothers and sisters are heroes such as Jesus, King Arthur, and Joan of Arc.

See Also: Animals in Creation, Axis Mundi in Creation, Culture Heroes in Creation, **Earth-Diver Creation**, Flood in Creation Myths, Two Creators Motif.

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MANDE

More than 50 groupings of the 15 million Mandean-speaking people live in Mali, Gambia, Guinea, Sierra Leone and

other West African countries. The Mande people tend to divide the world into two kinds of people. Both aristocrats and common people are Horonw, while others, the Nyamakalaw, possess Nyama, the spiritual force of nature and are, thus, magicians, sorcerers, and artists.

The creation myth of the Mande people of Mali is an example of a world egg, creation from chaos myth that begins as an ex nihilo creation; with the lone god creating the egg—in this case a seed. The myth also has elements of the imperfect creation type. There is also the theme of incest, a sacrificial Christ-like figure, and a flood.

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In the beginning Mangala (God) made the balaza seed. This seed did not work well, however, so he made two kinds of eleusine seeds and other pairs of seeds that would become the four directions, the four elements, and all of the things that organize creation. There were also seeds for two pairs of twins, each set made up of a male and female; these would become the first people. All of the seeds were together in God's egg, the world egg.

One of the male twins, Pemba, thought he could take dominion over creation, so he left the egg before his time. He fell through space until a part of his placenta became the earth. God made the other half the sun. Pemba was not pleased with the barren earth, however, and he tried to return to the egg. This was not possible, but Pemba did steal some male seeds from God. These he planted in the earth; an act of incest, because earth was made from his placenta and, therefore, from his own mother. One of the seeds, an eleusine, took root in the placenta's blood and came out red. The incest made the earth impure.

Meanwhile, back in Heaven, the male twin called Faro, who took the form of a fish, was sacrificed to atone for Pemba's sin. His body was cut into 60 pieces, which became trees on Earth; symbols of resurrection.

Then Mangala brought Faro back to life, gave him human form, and sent him to Earth on an ark made of the primordial sacred placenta, the mother of all. The ark landed on Mount Kouroula in the land of Mande, which means son of the fish. This was the World Mountain.

Faro stood tall on the ark; he had the original eight ancestors with him and all the first animals and plants. Like Faro, all the first beings contained the male and female life force in balance. The first beings watched the first sunrise from the ark. Then the ancestor of bards, Sourakata, descended from Heaven with the first sacred drum; the skull of the sacrificed Faro. He played on the drum to bring rain. No rain fell, so the primordial smith came down and struck a rock with his hammer, bringing rain. Now the twin fish (symbolizing Faro and Faro's son) came down, too. This is why the mannogo fish is sacred to the Mande.

In the time that followed, Faro created the world as we know it out of Mangala's original egg seeds and their descendants. The first people continued the planting and built sanctuaries. Faro struggled against the evil force represented by Pemba, his evil brother. Faro, who is also the Niger River (his head is Lake Debo), is fertility itself, containing the male and

female life forces. Faro flooded all of the land containing the impure seed of his brother. Only the good were saved in Faro's ark, and he taught them proper ways and how to make and keep the shrines.

***

It is possible that the figure of Faro was influenced by the Christian stories brought to Africa by missionaries. He is sacrificed, like Jesus, to atone for the sins of others—in this case, his twin brother, a Devil figure. As the animistic source of creation, however, he fits a traditional mold of animistic peoples—especially in Africa and North America. The culture hero, the one who brings knowledge, literally becomes creation in this mold. It is also clear that the highly spiritual Faro represents the powers of the Nyamakalaw Mandeans, whereas his twin, Pemba, contains all that is selfish and non-spiritual in humans.

See Also: Ancestors in Creation, Animistic Creation, Cosmic Egg in Creation, **Creation from Chaos**, Culture Heroes in Creation, Devil in Creation, Dismemberment of Primordial Being as Creation, Duality in Creation, **Ex Nihilo Creation**, Fall from Grace in Creation, Flood in Creation Myths, Four Directions in Creation, Imperfect or Accidental Creation, Incest in Creation, Sacrifice in Creation, Twins in Creation.

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MAORI

The Maori are a Polynesian people who have inhabited New Zealand since long before the arrival of Europeans. While their sacred stories resemble those of other Polynesians, such as the Samoans and Tahitians, the Maori mythology, like those of their cultural relatives, is sufficiently different to justify separate treatment. The Maori religious and mythological system concerns itself with profound spiritual matters and the nature of Being itself.

In many parts of New Zealand the creation myth does not say much, if anything, about the supreme being, Io (Iho). Sometimes, like so many creation myths, it begins with a primordial unity that must be separated—differentiated—so that creation can take place.



Tiki or Hei Tiki, carving representing the first man in Polynesian mythology. (© Suzanne Long / Alamy)

The Maori cosmogony usually begins, then, with the union of Rangi (Heaven) and Papa (Earth). There are several versions of this myth. The one that follows does also speak of Io.

***

In the beginning there was darkness and water, where Io lived alone and was inactive. In order to become active, Io uttered words calling on darkness to become "light-possessing darkness." So came light. When Io called for the light to become "dark-possessing light," darkness returned. Day and night had been born. Io continued creating with words—the "ancient and original sayings, which caused growth from the void."

Io called on the waters to separate and the heavens to be formed. Then Io became the gods. Most important, he created Rangi and Papa—Sky Father and Earth Mother—who cleaved together in a procreative embrace, crowding their offspring. Two of these, Rongo and Tane, created plants, forests, and insects. Tane separated his parents to make more room; he was the god of life. Rangi and Papa were so sad to be separated that to this day Rangi drops tears on Papa and Papa's sighs rise as mist to her spouse.

Other children of the first parents were the winds, rains, earthquakes, and Tu, the warrior god who wanted to kill his eternally coupling parents and whose children are the fearless Maori. The 10th child of Rangi and Papa was Tangaroa, the father of the hero Maui. Some say that the sun is the eye of Maui and that the eyes of his children became the evening and morning stars. Others say that Maui was thrown into the sea by his moon mother, Taranga, and rescued by Io, who hung him on the roof of his house.

The Maoris call New Zealand the Fish of Maui. Maui gave fire to humans, and died in a search for immortality. He needed to make that search because the last child of Rangi and Papa brought death to the world.

The first Maori was made by the god Tane out of red clay. Some say that it was the god Tiki who made the first man in his own image, and thus he named him Tiki, after himself.

***

The Maori creation myth is a metaphor for all types of creation, whether human or cosmic. It is for this reason that the ritual words by which Io made the world are still used today to help in the conception of a child, in the composition of a poem, or in the renewal of a broken mind or spirit.

The following is an example of a Maori ritual creation chant:

From the conception the increase,
From the increase the thought,
From the thought the remembrance,
From the remembrance the
consciousness,
From the consciousness the desire.
The world became fruitful;
It dwelt with the feeble glimmering;
It brought forth night:
The great night, the long night,
The lowest night, the loftiest night.
The thick night, to be felt,
The night to be touched,
The night not to be seen,
The night of death.
From the nothing the begetting,

From the nothing the increase,
From the nothing the abundance,
The power of increasing
The living breath:
It dwelt with the empty space,
And produced the atmosphere which is above us,
The atmosphere which floats above the earth;
The great firmament above us dwelt with the early dawn,
And the moon sprung forth;
The atmosphere above us dwelt with the heat,
And thence proceeded the sun;
They were thrown up above,
As the chief eyes of Heaven:
Then the Heavens became light,
The early dawn, the early day,
The mid-day.
The blaze of day from the sky. (See Taylor version in Reed)

See Also: Clay-based Creation, **Ex Nihilo Creation**, Polynesian, Separation of Heaven and Earth in Creation, Thought-based Creation, Word-based Creation, **World Parent Creation**.

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MAPUCHE

The Mapuche are the largest indigenous group in what is now Chile. Called Araucanos by the Spanish conquistadors and their descendants, the Mapuche resisted the Spaniards for centuries and have been marginalized since the independence of Chile from Spain. Their name suggests their central belief. Mapuche literally means "People [*che*] of the land [*mapu*]. There are several versions of their creation myth told by various branches of the Mapuche people. What follows is a series of fragments.

***

I the beginning there was only darkness and water until the creator made a world and put people on it—people into whom the creator imbued his spirit. . . .

Woman was created first, then, from a star, man to be her companion. . . .

There were two essential powers—embodied as serpents. There was Treng Treng (Tren Tren), the earth serpent, and Kai Kai, the water serpent. Sometimes there was war between the serpents and once Kai Kai flooded the world. A few Mapuche climbed a mountain as instructed by Tren Treng and were saved.

The survivors, say some, were two couples—an old man and woman to teach the old ways and a young couple to procreate.

***

The Mapuche believe that the very basis of proper life is a harmonious relationship between people, animals, and the land—that is Mother Earth. The centrality of Mother Earth is reflected in

the importance given by the Mapuche to women and their special strength. Traditionally, women played major leadership roles, often including the all-important role of the shaman.

See Also: Animals in Creation, **Ex Nihilo Creation**, Flood in Creation Myths.

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MARIANA ISLANDS

The indigenous population, the Hachamori, of the Mariana islands, a group of Micronesian islands including Guam, has long been almost extinct as a separate entity. Some traditions and stories have survived, however, by way of intermarriage of the indigenous people with Spanish and American colonists.

***

In the beginning Na Arean was alone, "a cloud that floats in nothingness." He did not exist in our way because there was not yet any existence. Then a thought came from himself into his mind, and he made water in one hand and then mud, which he rolled into a ball and sat on as if it were an egg.

After a while his head swelled until, on the third day, a man broke out. Na Arean greeted this new great thought as it came alive. "You are to be called Na Arean the Younger and are to sit as you will in my right or left eye." This the little man did until Na Arean told him to go down to the earth he had made and find its center. "But where is the center?" the man asked. Na Arean the Elder took a tooth from his mouth and thrust it into the earth and said, "This is the center, the navel." Then Na Arean the Younger went down through the hollow tooth.

When he got to the center of the earth he found that things were all pressed together and dark, perhaps because his father had sat on the place. So he organized things until the heavens were where they belonged and the sun could send light through Na Arean's hollow tooth.

***

This is clearly an ex nihilo creation, emanating as it does from the creator's thought. The creator permeates creation in an animistic sense. His assistant is his son, who performs another traditional chore of creators, the separation of Heaven and Earth, the primordial unity. There is an unusual earth-diver aspect to this myth as well.

See Also: Animistic Creation, Axis Mundi in Creation, Cosmic Egg in Creation, **Earth-Diver Creation**, **Ex Nihilo Creation**, Separation of Heaven and Earth in Creation, Thought-based Creation.

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MARSHALL ISLANDS

This group of Pacific islands was settled as early as the second millennium B.C.E. by a Mayo-Polynesian Micronesian people. The islands have come under the control

of various outside powers, including most recently, the United States. A Marshall Islands creation story contains a description of the origins of Bikini Island, where the first atomic bomb test took place and the bikini bathing suit got its name.

***

In ancient times when there was only water, Lowa, the uncreated, was alone. When he made a humming sound the islands emerged, along with the reefs and sandbanks. He hummed again and the plants and animals arrived. Lowa made four gods for the four directions and a gull god to constantly circle the sky. Lowa also created a man, who put the islands into a basket made from coconut leaves and tried to set them in order—the Carolines to the west and the Marshalls in a straight line, except for Namorik, which fell out of the basket. After he had placed all the islands, he threw away the basket, and it became Kili Island. Only one of the islands had coconut trees at the time. This was the little sandy island of Bikini (from *bok*, meaning sand, and *ni*, meaning coconut). Lowa sent his tattooists down to the islands to give each creature its own mark.

***

The lone ex nihilo creator here resembles other Polynesian creators. The differentiating quality of the Marshall Island creator, however, is the gentle sense of domesticity that pervades his story.

See Also: Animistic Creation, **Ex Nihilo Creation**, Four Directions in Creation, Polynesian.

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MAYAN

The Maya are a Mesoamerican indigenous people who still occupy much of parts of Southern Mexico—especially the Yucatan peninsula—Belize, El Salvador and Guatemala. Although influenced by earlier and contemporaneous Mesoamerican peoples, the Maya built significantly on that influence, and it can be argued that of all pre-Columbian peoples of the area, the Mayans achieved the highest development in terms of written language, architecture, mathematics, and astronomy. Mayan civilization can be traced back at least to the second millennium B.C.E. It reached its high point during the period between 500 and 900 C.E. By the late 17th century, the Mayans had been completely subdued by the Spanish.

One of the best known mythological expressions of Mayan culture is the *Popol Vuh* (the Book of the People), a 16th century book written in the dialect of the Quiché Mayan people of the Guatemalan highlands, but in the Latin script of the Spanish. The *Popol Vuh* contains the mythology and sacred history of the Quiché Maya as remembered several hundred years after their conquest by the Spanish and their forced conversion to Christianity. Almost certainly based on a Mayan codex in Mayan hieroglyphics, the original text was lost, but an 18th century handwritten copy

exists. The *Popol Vuh* contains one of the more simplistic Mesoamerican creation myths, an example of an imperfect creation and an ex nihilo creation by thought and word.

***

In the beginning there were only the creators, Tepeu and Gukumatz, the Feathered Serpent (also known as Kukulkan, the Mayan version of Quetzalcoatl), in the void and the waters. These two sat together and thought. They glittered with sun power. Whatever they thought and whatever they said came into being. They thought the emptiness of the void should become something and it did. "Let there be earth," they said, and there was earth. They thought, "Mountains," and there were mountains. They said, "Trees," and there were trees. So it went. They separated the sky and Earth, and they made animals. They called on the animals to praise them, but the animals could not. The creators thought they had better make beings who could be more aware of creation and of them. They wished to be praised. The first animals of creation they relegated to a low position. They would live outside in the wild and be hunted.



Intricately carved wooden pulpit decorated with a Mayan hero Tecum Uman Santiago Atitlan's colonial church Guatemala. (© J Marshall - Tribaleye Images / Alamy)

The creators spoke again to create beings they hoped would be able to praise them. They made a human form out of clay. It fell apart when it got wet, so they tried again with wood. These wood creatures did not fall apart. They walked and talked and made more of themselves, but they were too inflexible, too mindless, and without inner being. They did not think of their makers, and they caused troubles on Earth, so Tepeu caused a great flood to destroy these imperfect beings. Those who were left were chased by the other animals into the woods to be monkeys.

The makers had to hurry; the dawn of our world was approaching. With the help of Mountain Lion, Coyote, Parrot, and Crow, they got together the things that would be food for the people—mainly corn, beans, and water—and made the four first people of the four directions. These first four, the Quiché ancestors born of Tepeu and the Feathered Serpent, spoke well, worked well, and knew what there was to know. They also praised their makers with the right words. These

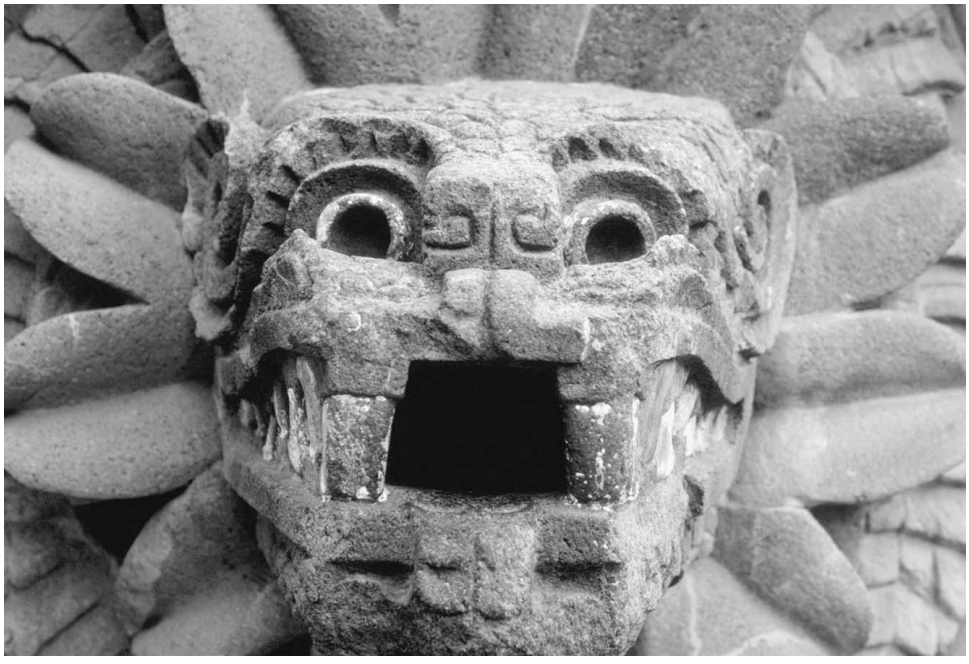
first four were wise and powerful. Tepeu and the Feathered Serpent feared them, so they removed some of the people's power and vision. Then they gave wives to the first four, and these original people procreated. They made the Quiché and the other tribes, too.

Also important in the early days of creation were the sacred twins, Xbalanque and Hunahpu, culture heroes who were miraculously conceived and who did good deeds for the people. Their father had been killed after losing a ball game to the lords of the Underworld. The twins would later avenge their father's death by defeating the same lords in a ball game. The twins were immortalized by the creators as the sun and moon.

***

The Maya of the Yucatan peninsula in present day Mexico tell a somewhat different story. They say that in the darkness of the beginning a Stag god (Puma Snake) and a Stag goddess (Jaguar Snake) came into being, took human form and through their sexual union produced the world.

The *Popol Vuh* creation story contains elements familiar to any reader of Mesoamerican myths—the Feathered Serpent, the Twins, the importance of the Four Directions. It is a myth that clearly reflects certain specific Mayan traditions—the ball game that could result in the death of the loser, the role of colors and four directions in the Mayan calendar. The myth is highly sophisticated, a fact that arises naturally out of its being



Carving of Quetzalcóatl, one of the most important gods in the Aztec pantheon. The figure of the plumed serpent appears throughout pre-Columbian Mexican art and architecture. (Corel)

recorded—written—sacred history that is scripture, as opposed to fragmented cultural dreaming.

See Also: Ancestors in Creation, Animals in Creation, Clay-based Creation, Coyote in Creation, **Creation from Chaos**, Culture Heroes in Creation, Deus Faber Creation, **Ex Nihilo Creation**, Fall from Grace in Creation, Flood in Creation Myths, Four Directions in Creation, Imperfect or Accidental Creation, Mixtec, Separation of Heaven and Earth in Creation, Sexual Impulse in Creation, Thought-based Creation, Twins in Creation, Two Creators Motif, Word-based Creation.

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Melanesian. *See* Banks Islands; Fiji Islands; New Britain; New Hebrides; Papua New Guinea; San Cristobal; Solomon Islands

Mesoamerican. *See* Aztec (Mexica); Mayan; Mixtec; Olmec; Teotihuacan; Toltec; Zapotec

Mesopotamian. *See* Assyrian; Babylonian; Sumerian

Micronesian. *See* Gilbert Islands; Mariana Islands; Marshall Islands; Truk Islands

Miji. *See* Dhammai (Miji)

MINYONG

A non-Hindu people of northern India, the Minyong have a creation myth that contains the familiar theme of the separation of Heaven and Earth.

***

In the beginning there was the woman, Sedi, who was earth, and the man, Melo, who was sky. When they decided to get married, the creatures between them were afraid they might be crushed by the love-making of the great couple. A being called Sedi-Diyor hit Melo hard, and he retreated upwards from his earth-wife. Before he left, Melo gave Sedi two daughters. Sedi, however, was so sad at the departure of her husband that she refused to care for her children. She found a nurse for them, and they grew more radiant each day. When their nurse died and had to be buried, however, the girls died of grief and there was darkness everywhere.

The people were afraid of the darkness and missed the girls, so they dug up the nurse to see what might be the matter. In the grave they found only two great shining eyes in which they saw their own reflections. They washed the eyes but there were still images in them. They called a carpenter, who made models of the reflections. These turned out to be two girls.

The two girls grew in the house where they were kept. The older one became so bright that she left the house and began her life journey. The world became light as she entered it. When her bright sister followed her there was too much light, and things began to wither. The people decided they must kill one of the girls to lessen the heat and the light.

Frog agreed to do the deed; he shot the second girl, Bong, with an arrow, and the light and heat diminished. Rat took Bong's body to her sister, Bomong, who, in her grief, hid her head under a stone. The world grew dark again, and the people were afraid.

They sent Cock to find Bomong. He urged her to come out from under the rock, but she refused. She said she would come out only if her sister was revived, so the carpenter came again. He was able to put some of Bong's light back. She was, of course, the moon. Then Bomong, who is the sun, came back too, and everything was fine.

***

There are obvious similarities between this creation and the Amaterasu (sun goddess) aspect of the Japanese creation. Given the relative isolation of the Minyong in northern India, this would seem to be an example of parallel development rather than of cross-cultural influence. Another story of the necessary manipulation of the sun and moon in the early stages of creation occurs as well in an Apache myth in North America.

See Also: Apache, Indian, Japanese (Shinto), Separation of Heaven and Earth in Creation, Sexual Impulse in Creation, Sun in Creation, **World Parent Creation**.

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MIWOK

The Miwok of California practiced an animistic religion, seeing spirits in every aspect of creation. Each small group was led by an elder and by a woman who directed ceremonies. This is a Miwok earth-diver creation story that, like so many western Indian myths, features Coyote.

***

Once there was only water and Coyote. Coyote sent some ducks to look for earth. One of the ducks succeeded, and Coyote took the soil from its beak. Then he sent the duck down for seeds. Coyote mixed the soil, seeds, and water, and the mixture grew until it became the earth.

***

Here Coyote is a genuine creator rather than a trickster (his usual role). This myth is and is related to the Yokut creation story and many others like it.

See Also: Animals in Creation, Coyote in Creation, **Earth-Diver Creation**, Trickster in Creation, Yokut.

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MIXTEC

Conquerors of the great ancient Zapotec city of Monte Alban and fierce resistors of the Aztecs and Spanish, the Mixteca are an indigenous Mesoamerican people living primarily in what are now the states of Oaxaca, Geurrero, and Puebla in Mexico—Mixtecapan (Home of the people of the Clouds). The Mixteca recorded their history on painted deer hide. Their creation from chaos myth tells of a beginning when there was not yet time.

***

The earth was covered in water and darkness, and green slime was on the waters. Time began when the Mixtec deer god, Puma-Snake, and his beautiful stag goddess wife, Jaguar-Snake, took human form and tamed the chaos, making a wondrous home for themselves on top of a cliff they raised over the waters. They rested the sky on a great ax they had placed on the cliff.

These first gods had two sons, Wind-Nine Snake and Wind-Nine Cave, who played on the great cliff and had marvelous powers. They learned the arts of husbandry, and they used tobacco to pray to the gods for an earth on which people could plant things. The creator god agreed to their wish and freed the earth of the primeval sea so people could plant and roam about. The cliff home of the gods is still in Oaxaca near the Mixtec River of Origins where the first Mixtec were born from the trees.

Some say that after the deer deities had more children, a great flood destroyed much of the world, but the creator remade Heaven and Earth.

***

There are themes and elements in this myth that are found in other, clearly related, Mesoamerican creation myths—those of the Mayans and Aztecs, for instance. The Wind-Nine children are, in effect, sacred twins such as are found in other Mesoamerican myths, and the flood is found in the Mayan myth as well as in this one.

See Also: Animals in Creation, Aztec (Mexica), **Creation from Chaos**, Flood in Creation Myths, Mayan, Sexual Impulse in Creation, Twins in Creation, Zapotec.

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MODOC

The Modoc people of southwest Oregon are close linguistic and cultural relatives of the Klamath Indians. There are two versions of the Modoc creation story; one an emergence myth dominated by a god figure and one an earth-diver myth featuring a culture hero-trickster-shaman figure who may be the source or basis of a bear totem.

***

Once Kumush, also called Old Man, went with his daughter to the spirit world beneath the earth. Down there in that beautiful place the spirits gathered each night to sing and dance. By morning they had returned to the spirit house and were bones again.

After a few days, Kumush decided to go back to the upper world; he wanted to take some spirits along to become new people. He tried to carry some bones away in a basket, but each time he tried, he tripped and fell, dropping the bones. Finally Kumush and his daughter managed to get to the upper world. They threw the bones down on the ground and cried out, "Indian bones," and the various tribes were formed. They threw bones toward the west and named them Shastas (brave warriors) and threw other bones just a bit north and called them Klamaths (as easy to frighten as

women). They continued in this manner until all the tribes were created. Kumush made the bones left nearby into the Modoc people, a small but brave tribe. Finally, Kumush told the people how to eat and how to divide work between men and women. Then Kumush and his daughter went to the place where the sun rises and traveled the sun road to the middle of the sky. They still live there today.

***

The following is another version of the Modoc creation story in which it was Kumokums who made the world, rather the way a child makes a world by playing in the sand.

***

In the beginning there was only Kumokums and Tule Lake. He reached way down to the bottom of the lake and got some earth to make land around the lake. He took the earth and patted it, and it grew until he was sitting on a little island in the lake and the lake was surrounded by land. Then he played with the land, piling up mountains and scratching rivers out with his fingernails. He went on to pull trees out of the ground, and then he made birds and other animals. Then he was tired, so he slept through the winter under the lake. He made a little hole so he could look out once in a while to see how things were going. That hole is still there, and some day Kumokums will surely wake up.

***

Kumokums is a version of the ubiquitous Native American trickster-creator cum culture hero. The Algonquian Nanabohzo is a close archetypal relative. Raven and Coyote are more distant ones.

See Also: Coyote in Creation, Culture Heroes in Creation, **Earth-Diver Creation**, **Emergence Creation**, Raven in Creation, Trickster in Creation.

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MOHAWK (KANIENKAHA)

The Mohawk are the easternmost tribe of the Iroquois confederation. The tribe has three clans: the Bear Clan, the Turtle Clan, and the Wolf Clan. The Mohawk creation story is so close to those of the other Iroquoian tribes that it can reasonably be called the Iroquoian creation. The myth tells the story of the woman who falls from the sky and then becomes an earth-diver narrative.

***

Once there was a place in the sky where people lived in perfect harmony and peace. Houses were oriented east to west in accordance with the rising and setting sun. In one of the houses a woman lived with a special man who needed protection because of his mysterious powers. The man, however, became sick and died—a phenomenon previously unknown in this sky world. The people placed the man in a container for burial. Before long the woman was seen to be

pregnant, but she did not reveal the father. When her time came she gave birth to a girl and named her Aientsik (Earth) who grew quickly. One day Aientsik began to cry uncontrollably. Only when she stood in front of the burial container of the dead man—actually her father—did she stop crying. She talked to the spirit of her father for hours at a time, and one day she told her mother that she was to marry. In preparation, her mother packed a basket of cornbread and berries and Aientsik, as directed by her father spirit, left to find the place where Tharonhaiwakon (Sky Supporter) lived. When she got there the girl gave Tharonhaiwakon the basket of food and stayed with him for three days and nights. Soon the man became sick. He brought Aientsik to a special tree—the Tree of Light—and told her to lift it out of the ground. He knew this would make him feel better. The girl uprooted the tree, exposing an opening through which she looked. As she leaned over, Tharaonhaiwakon pushed her into the hole and she began to fall, grabbing roots of beans, corn and squash on the way through the hole. Now Aientsik fell and fell into the darkness below the sky world until finally she saw a vast expense of water below with animals floating about in it. The loon looked up and saw the falling woman—Sky Woman, as they called her. He asked the Turtle to let her fall on his back, and the flying animals went up to help guide her to her landing place.

Aientsik knew that the animals would need dirt to form a world, so she asked them to dive for some. Several animals tried but failed to find the dirt. Finally Muskrat succeeded and placed a small amount of dirt on Turtle's back. As each day Aientsik circled Turtle's back, the dirt grew into more land, and gradually the roots she had brought with her from the upper world began to give forth plants in the new earth. These plants were corn, beans, and squash, the staple food of the Mohawks.

***

The Mohawk myth is similar not only to other Iroquoian myths but to those of the Cherokee, Assiniboine, and others. The little muskrat who succeeds in the earth-diving, the most ordinary of animals, perhaps represents the idea that ordinary people can sometimes become heroes. The Turtle as the foundation for earth is a ubiquitous North American earth-diver hero and is, logically, the totem for one of the major Mohawk clans. Sky Woman herself is fertility and earth. The fact that death is associated with her in the upper world indicates that though her origins are divine, her role as earth goddess demands the inclusion of death, an integral aspect of the cycles of fertility.

See Also: Animals in Creation, Assiniboine, Cherokee (Tsalagi), **Earth-Diver Creation**, Goddess as Creator, Huron, Iroquois, Primordial Waters in Creation, Sky Woman Descends.

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Molucca Islands (Spice Islands). *See* Ceram

MONGOLIAN

Mongols are people living primarily in Mongolia and parts of China and Russia

who speak the Mongol language. The Mongols tend to be nomadic herders. The dominant religion in Mongolia is Tibetan Buddhism. The myths below reflect both that fact and the existence of an earlier mythology such as the one revealed in the creation myth of the Mongol-speaking Buriats in Russian Central Asia.

The central figure in the Mongol Buddhist story is the Lama (superior one) of Tibetan Buddhists. According to that story, when there was no earth but only water, the Lama descended from the heavens and stirred the waters. All this stirring caused a congealing of the waters into land.

A more detailed version of the Tibetan Buddhist inspired myth follows.

***

The creator was the lama, Udan (sometimes thought to be the Buddha himself). In the beginning there was only the darkness until the deus faber creator made the universe by separating Sky and Earth with 99 golden columns and establishing the three worlds—Heaven for the gods, Earth for living people, and the Underworld for the dead. Father Sky and Mother Earth are the parents of humanity.

Some say that the creator made a heaven with nine levels and an earth also with nine levels. Some employ an aspect of the earth-diver myth, suggesting that the first land was formed in the primordial waters on the back of a golden frog.

***

The actual creation of the first human couple, say some Mongols, was clay-based, but others say that the first men mated with animals. Mongols, according to this story, came from a mating of men and ewes.

Other versions of the Mongol creation, such as the earth-diver one below, have much in common with other pre-Buddhist shamanic-type creation myths of Central Asia and native North America.

***

In the beginning there was only water and Sky Father, who had two sons, Ulgen Tenger and Erleg Khan. Sky Father gave Ulgen the space that would be the upper world and Erleg the space that would be the lower world. To create his world, Ulgen sent the loon into the depths to bring up mud with which to form land. The loon failed. A duck was more successful and provided a bit of mud upon which Ulgen immediately fell asleep. Ulgen's brother Erleg, seeing this, tried to pull the land from under his brother, but this only made the land grow in all directions. Now Ulgen woke up and created the animals and humans out of wet clay and left them to dry. He assigned the dog to watch over them, exactly as described in the Buriat creation myth. While he was away, his mischievous brother came to look at the new beings, but the dog kept him away until Erleg tempted him by offering him a fur coat. As it was snowing and he was cold, the dog relented and allowed Erleg to come close to the new forms. Erleg then spat on them, condemning them forever to the diseases and pains that animals and humans are subject to. When he returned, Ulgen was furious, and punished the dog by making him smelly and dependent on humans for survival.

***

As in so many of the Central Asian creation myths, there are two creators; one a trickster figure whose destructive motives are at odds with those of his brother. The two brothers reflect a sense of the imperfect and hard world in which the Mogols find themselves and the essential duality of the religious forces that created that world.

See Also: Altaic, Animals in Creation, Buriat, Central Asian, Chaos to Cosmos, Chukchee, Clay-based Creation, **Creation from Chaos**, Deus Faber Creation, Duality in Creation, **Earth-Diver Creation**, **Ex Nihilo Creation**, Imperfect or Accidental Creation, Primordial Waters in Creation, Samoyed, Separation of Heaven and Earth in Creation, Trickster in Creation, Two Creators Motif.

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Monte Alban. *See* Zapotec

MOSETENE

The Mosetene of the Bolivian rainforest are subsistence farmers, hunters, and fishermen who have to some extent resisted colonization from Incan days to the present. According to their mythology, the creator was Dobitt, whose home was Heaven.

***

Dobitt's Heaven is a great raft that floats in space. It is guided by angel-like spirits. Dobitt made humans out of clay and placed them on Earth. Then he sent his son Keri as a white condor to see what was going on in the world, but the rope by which he was let down broke and Keri was killed. Dobitt made a fish out of his son's head, and then went to the world himself to complete the creation. He made all the animals, poured out water from his basket to make rivers, lakes, and oceans, and taught humans how to survive. Some say that Dobitt arranged for the sky to be held up above the earth by a huge serpent.

***

A puzzling aspect of this myth is the death of the son, Keri, who should logically become the culture hero of the myth—a role taken over, however, by the creator himself. It is tempting to assume that this myth has been influenced by Christianity. Keri, whose head becomes a fish—a food staple of the Mosetene and a symbol of Christ—thus dies in the service of his father, and, indirectly, of humanity.

See Also: Animals in Creation, Clay-based Creation, **Creation from Chaos**, Culture Heroes in Creation, Separation of Heaven and Earth in Creation.

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MUNDURUC

The Munduruc people of Brazil are a patriarchal society in which men occupy themselves with hunting and a shamanic spirit-based religion in which sorcery plays a role. The Munduruc believe that the creator is Karusakaibo, who was assisted in the beginning by Daiiru, the

armadillo. Their myth is related to the emergence type of creation.

***

One day Karusakaibo was so angry at Daiiru that the little armadillo hid in the ground. The creator blew into the hole and stomped his foot so hard that the culprit was blasted out. He told Karusakaibo that there were humans below the earth. The two friends, now reconciled, decided to get the humans up to the surface. They made a beautiful rope of cotton, such as the Mundurucs make today, and dropped it down the hole with Daiiru tied to one end. He showed the people how to climb out, but so many hung onto the rope that it broke. Half of the people had to stay in the underworld, where they still are. Everything is the opposite there from what it is here; the sun goes in the opposite direction, it is night there when it is day here, and the moon is there when it is not here. The people came up at Necodemos, and the Mundurucs are the ones who look most like Karusakaibo.

***

In this myth the Munduruc establish themselves as the true children of the creator. Daiiru, the Armadillo, is the first embodiment of the shaman who descends into the underworld of spirits to release at least some of the people from darkness and non-creation.

See Also: Animals in Creation, **Emergence Creation**, Shamanism and Creation.

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MUYSCA (MUISCA)

The ancient Muyscas of Peru and Colombia practiced a solar cult in which human sacrifice was sometimes made to the Sun god. The Sun was said to have been their creator.

***

For some, the Sun was Bochia, a very old bearded man who, like a culture hero, taught them about planting and rituals. Bochia's wife was jealous of the time he spent with the people and sent a flood to destroy them. The Sun set things to right, however; he made his wife the moon and he dried up the flood.

***

From the mythologist's perspective, the Muysca story is more a flood myth *per se* than a creation myth.

See Also: Culture Heroes in Creation, **Ex Nihilo Creation**, Fall from Grace in Creation, Flood in Creation Myths, Sun in Creation.

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NANDI

The Nandi people live in the Nandi Hills and Rift Valley area of the Kenyan highlands. They worship a solar deity, Asis, and are deeply concerned with ancestral spirits. Each clan possesses a totem animal and the various groups are led by medicine men (*Orkoiyot*).

When the Nandi people arrived in what is now Kenya, they found the Dorobo people already there and soon

assimilated their mythology. In fact, in the Nandi creation myth the Dorobo are the first people, who, like first people in so many African creations, are a source of tragedy for the rest of creation.

***

Asis decided that it was time to arrange the world. He came down to Earth and found the thunder, the elephant, and a Dorobo man already there. The thunder and the elephant were irritated by the fact that the Dorobo could turn over, seemingly at will, in his sleep while they had to get up to turn over. In fact, the thunder was so upset by the man's behavior and so afraid of him that he fled to the sky, where he still lives. The elephant chided the thunder for fearing a being so small. "I fear him because he is evil," said the thunder. As for the man, he, as it happened, was afraid of thunder and was not displeased to see him retreat to the sky. Then the man took a poison arrow and decided to kill the elephant with it. The elephant was terrified and begged the thunder to take him up to the heavens, but the thunder refused. "I thought you were not afraid of a being so small," he rumbled. The man killed the elephant and continues to do so. The man reproduced and took power all over the world.

***

It is of interest to note, in light of the Nandi people coming late to Kenya and absorbing the myths of others, that in this myth God found a creation already there when he decided to set up the world as we know it, and that he seems to have had little to do with the way things eventually worked out. It is of interest also that the myth seems to reflect little of what differentiates the Nandi people from the Dorobo.

See Also: Animals in Creation, **Creation from Chaos**, Deus Otiosus or Absconditus in Creation.

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Native North American. *See* specific tribes

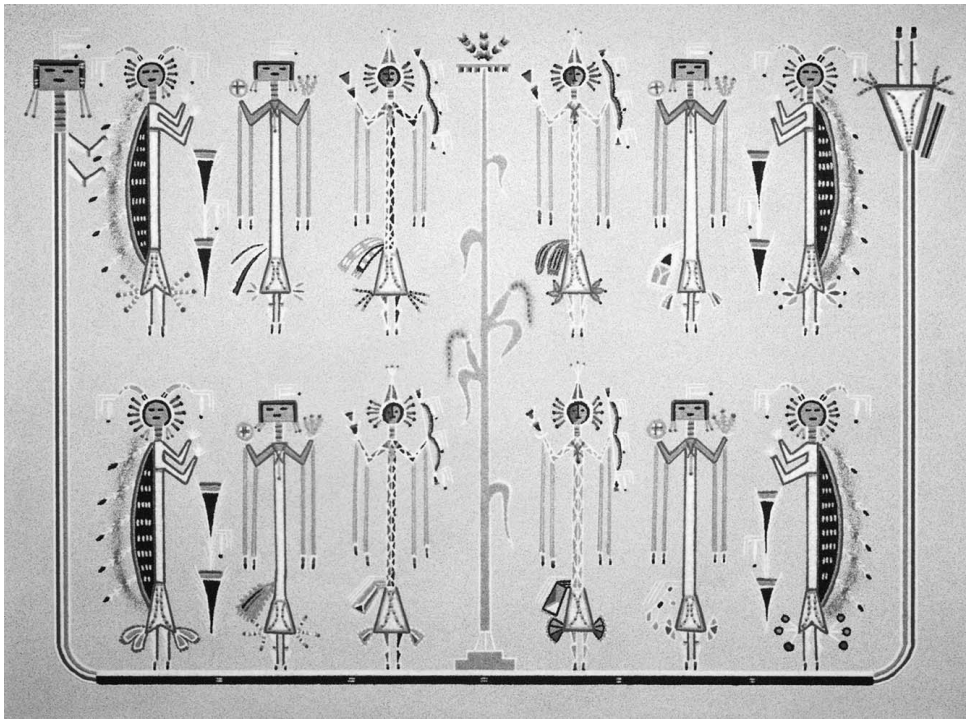
NAVAJO (DINE)

The largest of the Native American nations is the Dine (the People), or Navajos, as the Spanish first called them. These Athabascan-speaking people, close relatives of the Apache and Alaskan Athabascans, were, relatively speaking, latecomers to the Dinehtah, a vast homeland in the Four Corners region of the American Southwest. Recent scholarship suggests they may have arrived as early as 1000 C.E. They remained until they were expelled from the area in 1864 by a force led by Kit Carson and were forced to make the decimating Long Walk to Fort Sumner on the New Mexico/Texas border. There they lived the life of miserably treated prisoners for four years, and it was not until 1868 that those who were left were marched back to a greatly reduced reservation in the Dinehtah. The Navajo were, and remain, different from their Indian neighbors. Unlike the cliff-dwelling Anasazi (the Old Ones) and their Hopi and Pueblo descendants, the Navajo have traditionally been herders who live

in small family compounds made up of hogans, small dome structures that stand as microcosms of the harmonious way of life, the "beautiful rainbow" way of which the Navajos often speak.

The mythology of the Dine contains elements borrowed from their neighbors, whose cultures had been established in the Southwest for centuries before the Navajo arrived. It is a complex mythology associated with rituals. There are inevitably several variations of any given Navajo myth, because, unlike the Hopi, Zuni, Acoma and Rio Grande Pueblo peoples, they have not tended to live in the large concentrated village groups that are more conducive to orthodoxy in myth and ritual. The creation myth itself exists in several versions as sung by various sacred singers or shamans. Still, there is a basic consistency to Dine mythology that transcends the details. The myths are passed on orally from old to young teacher-shamans and are treated with the respect reserved for sacred texts in any culture. The Dine myths are a history of the people and an expression of the right way, much as the Old Testament, with all its variations and contradictions, is a history of the Jews and a reflection of the Jewish approach to being.

The Navajo creation story is an emergence myth. It begins with a dark first world, or, as it turns out, underworld. Above that first world was another domed world, and another, and still



Navajo sand painting with Yei figures and a corn plant. (© Geoffrey Clements/CORBIS)

another before our world, the fifth world. The people made their way through these worlds, evolving by the fourth world into people as we know them. Above our present world there is thought to be a sixth world of perfect harmony.

***

The First World, an island floating in the endless oceans, domed by the hogan-like sky and secured by the four directions, was populated by the Insect people. They really were more like insects than what we think of as people. Morning for them was when white came up in the east and day was blue in the south. Evening was yellow in the west, and night was black in the north. The gods of the Insect people lived in the surrounding seas—these were Water Monster in the east, Blue Heron in the south, Frog in the west, and White Mountain Thunder in the north.

The Insect people were quarrelsome. They recognized no sexual taboos and paid no attention to the warnings of their gods. The gods told them to leave the First World and forced them to do so by creating a great flood, which covered the First World. The Insect people flew up to the hard sky; through a hole in the east they entered the Second World, which was blue.

The Second World was populated by the Swallow people, who lived in strange rough houses with holes in their tops. After searching the world in vain for people like themselves, the Insect people made friends with the Swallow people and lived with them. One day an Insect sexually assaulted a Swallow, however, and once again the Insects were expelled from a world. Led by the Locust, they flew to the top of the Second World, until Nilch'i, the wind, appeared and told them how to find in the south the entrance to the Third World, which was yellow.

In the Third World, the Insect people discovered the Grasshopper people, who lived in holes in the ground. After searching in vain for people like themselves, they befriended the Grasshoppers and lived with them. As in the Second World, however, they upset the harmony by way of sexual assault and once again they were ordered to leave. They flew up to the sky, and after searching for an exit, they were led to an opening in the west.

The Fourth World was black and white. There was no sun, moon, or stars, and no real day. There were four mountains—one on the horizon of each of the directions. There did not seem to be inhabitants, but Locust scouts reported that they had in fact found people in the north who lived in houses and who grew things in fields. These were the Pueblo people, the Kisani, who visited the Insect people and offered them kindness and food. The Insect people vowed among themselves not to make the mistake here that they had made in the other worlds, and things went well for quite a time. Then they were visited for four days in succession by four strange beings who made incomprehensible signs. These were White Body, Blue Body, Yellow Body, and Black Body. On the fourth day, Black Body explained to the Insect people that the gods wished to make more people, but ones that looked like themselves, without the odd appendages and foul smells of the Insect

people. Black Body instructed the Insects to bathe themselves and await the return of the gods in 12 days. The Insect people bathed themselves on the morning of the twelfth day and dried themselves with corn meal—white for males, yellow for females. Then the gods called out as they approached, appearing on the fourth call. Blue Body and Black Body carried buckskin, while White Body and Yellow Body carried one yellow and one white ear of corn. The gods performed a sacred ceremony during which supernatural Mirage people appeared, the yellow ear of corn became a woman, and the white ear of corn became a man. The wind came and gave breath to these beings. The gods instructed the Insects to make a brush hogan for First Man and First Woman, who lived together as husband and wife.

After four days, First Woman gave birth to hermaphrodite twins. After four more days she produced another set, a boy and a girl. Five sets of twins in all were born, and in each case they became fully grown in four days and, except for the hermaphrodites, each set lived together as husband and wife.

First Man, First Woman, and each set of twins were taken at four-day intervals to the home of the gods in the east and were taught the mysteries of life, including witchcraft. They were taught how to wear masks in certain ceremonies and how to pray for necessities. They learned to impersonate the talking god, the house god, and many others. They also learned to keep their incestuous marriages secret, to marry outside of their own immediate family, and to marry among the Insect people. Soon they inhabited the land. They built dams and planted fields, like the Kisani. One of the hermaphrodite twins invented pottery, the other the wicker water bottle. The People also learned to hunt, and with the help of the gods they learned to use deer heads as masks to make the hunt more successful.

One day the sky (Father Sky) and the earth (Mother Earth) seemed to slam together, and when they separated, Coyote and Badger appeared. Coyote hung about the People's farm, and Badger went into the hole to the lower world.

The Kisani chief taught the People about the four sacred mountains—Mount Blanca in the east, Mount Taylor in the south, the San Francisco Peaks in the west, and Mount Hesperus (Navajo Mountain) in the north.

Then the People began to quarrel. First Woman accused First Man of being lazy and of only working in order to have the pleasure of her vagina. "We do not need you men," said First Woman. So it was that the men and women separated and lived on opposite sides of the river. The men persuaded the Kisani people—men and women—to come to their side, and they took all their tools with them. During the first winter both sides did well. The men worked hard to provide for themselves in their new place, and the women lived on the stores of the old settlement. The women sometimes came to the river and teased the men. Over the next years, the fields of the men did well, and the women slacked off. Soon the women were starving and they no longer taunted the men across the river. Many tried to swim across and were

taken by Water Monster. Finally, the men allowed the women to cross over, and after cleansing ceremonies the men and women came together again. Two young girls were taken by Water Monster on the way over.

With the help of the gods and their mysterious ceremonies, the People went under the waters and found the lost children with Water Monster and two of his own children in the North room of many colors. The People were allowed to take their children, but Coyote, who had descended with them, stole the children of Water Monster. Since Coyote always kept his robe closely wrapped around him, he was able to conceal his theft from the People, but the wrath of Water Monster was not hidden. Soon a great flood came. The people were protected from the flood only at the last minute. A strange old man and his son appeared and hid them in a huge reed. Since Turkey was at the bottom of the reed, his tail feathers got wet at the tip and turned white, as they remain today.

The People sent scouts to the sky to seek a means of escape from the Fourth World. It was Locust who finally succeeded in digging through to the Fifth World, but the water followed the People up the reed and began to enter the Fifth World, too. Only when the children of Water Monster were discovered and thrown down the hole did the waters subside. After the flood, the People looked about for food. The Kisani had brought some corn kernels, and some of the People threatened to take the new corn. Eventually the Kisani, the Pueblo people, and the People (the Dine) went their own ways.

First Man, First Woman, Black Body, and Blue Body then made the world of Dinehtah. They reestablished the sacred mountains, made male rain (hard rain) and female rain (soft rain), and brought up the gods from the Fourth World. Finally, they made the sun and moon, and there was light in the Fifth World.

***

It should be understood that the creation story, the very center of Navajo mythology, is meant to accompany particular rituals, especially curing rituals and other rites of new beginning. To hear the whole Dine creation, one would have to attend a Blessing Way, the nine-day ceremony that is the most holy of Navajo ceremonies. In the Blessing Way, the creation is not only chanted: it is reflected microcosmically in the hogan in which the ceremony takes place and visually re-created in elaborate but temporary sand paintings, the colors, directions, and figures of which represent the basic principles on which the universe is based. The Navajos have no temples or kivas (underground religious spaces of the Pueblo people), but the hogan and the sand painting are more than adequate as sacred and symbolic space.

The Navajo Creation myth, or *Dine Bahane*, is a great mytho-historical epic of a branch of Native North America. In terms of its complexity it is an American *Enuma Elish* or *Genesis*. It establishes a people in a geographical, historical, and religious space and it contains most of the great themes that mark creation myths from all over the world. It shares with the American pueblo people the myth of

emergence. The Coyote-Trickster role in creation points back to the Central Asian origins of the Athabascans. The flood theme here is shared with most of the world, as are the themes of the four directions and animals in creation. History is reflected in the interactions in the myth between the emerging Navajos and the already-present Kisani (pueblo people) from whom the Dine did, in fact, learn a great deal even as the two groups struggled against each other. The myth also uses humor to reflect the nature of social and sexual relationships between men and women in the Navajo nation.

See Also: Ages of Creation, Ancestors in Creation, Animals in Creation, Coyote in Creation, Creation Myths as Curing, Earth Mother, **Emergence Creation**, Fall from Grace in Creation, Flood in Creation Myths, Four Directions in Creation, Hopi, Incest in Creation, Separation of Heaven and Earth in Creation, Sexual Impulse in Creation, Shamanism and Creation, Sky Father, Trickster in Creation, Twins in Creation.

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NEGRITOS

The Negritos of Southeast Asia are represented by several groups, including the Aeta of the Philippines, the Mani of Thailand, the Andamanese of the Indian Andaman Islands, and the Semang of Malaysia. It is said that Negritos were the earliest inhabitants of the Kerela area of India. The Negritos are related to Polynesians and Africans, perhaps the Pygmies, with whom they share a smallness in height. Many scholars have suggested that they are descendants of the earliest human migrants from Africa. In Malaysia the Negritos are called *orang asli* (the original people). These people tell a creation myth characterized by creation by thought or dreaming. There is also the familiar theme of the world tree, a kind of axis mundi or world axle around which creation turns.

***

In the beginning there was only the divine couple, Pedn and Manoid, and there was the sun, but no earth. It was the dung beetle who created the earth out of mud. After a while, the couple came down to the new Earth. They had children, but in a strange way. It came about that, in a dream, Manoid begged Pedn for a child, and Pedn went out and picked some fruit from a tree, which became a boy child when he placed it on a cloth. When Manoid dreamed of another child, Pedn created a girl child on the cloth with the seed from the tree. The boy was Kakuh-bird and the girl was Tortoise. They married and had children, one of whom shot an arrow into a rock that then gave forth water.

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The picking of fruit from a tree resulting in the divine child and the creation of another divine child from the seed of the tree is reminiscent of the Ceramese Hainuwele myth of neighboring Indonesia.

There are also dream-like elements that call to mind Australian aboriginal myths.

See Also: Animals in Creation, Axis Mundi in Creation, Ceram, Clay-based Creation, Thought-based Creation, **World Parent Creation**.

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NETSILIK

Longtime inhabitants of Arctic Canada and western Greenland, the Inuit (Eskimo) people known as Netsilik or Netsilingmiut have traditionally survived by fishing and sealing. In their creation myth words tame chaos.

***

Some say that early people came out of the ground from tussocks (clumps of grass) and that mysterious women who already existed here nursed the new people. Others say they don't know about the beginning—only that the earth and people are here now. They say that long ago the only thing there was the sea—no animals. The people, when they first lived on Earth, did not use fat to burn in their lamps. In those days new snow would burn, so animal fat wasn't necessary. In these first days the people had to travel long distances to find food. They say, however, that the first people had magic words that when spoken could carry them—house and all—to a new place where they could become part of a new settlement and find food. But it was dark in those days and forests existed but only at the bottom of the sea. Also, there wasn't any ice on the sea in those days. And there were only men—no women. They say that men made women. This is how: there was a great rain flood that destroyed everything. The animals died and so did the people—all but two men, who lived together as if they were married, and one of them became pregnant. Since they were also shamans they were able to change the pregnant man's penis into a vagina so he/she could give birth. This is how the people began again.

***

The Netsilik share with other Inuits a sense of comradeship with animals and a belief in shamanic power as a source of creation. Even in this land of ice there is the ubiquitous theme of the great flood.

See Also: Animals in Creation, **Creation from Chaos**, **Emergence Creation**, Flood in Creation Myths, Inuit, Sexual Impulse in Creation, Shamanism and Creation, Word-based Creation.

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NEW BRITAIN

New Britain is one of the four parts of Papua New Guinea in the Melanesian Pacific. The population of New Britain is made up of Papuans and Austronesians. The myth fragment below is Papuan in origin.

***

Two culture heroes, To-Kabinana and To-Karvuvu, came out of the blood of a spirit. When two women emerged from coconuts, they mated with them and so produced the ancestors of the people. The culture heroes then taught the people how to live. But the heroes were not the same. They represented opposing forces in a life dominated by light and dark, good and evil.

***

Culture heroes are of importance in Melanesian creation myths in general, and as is the case with these twin heroes, they represent an essential duality in nature. The coconut sources of the two wives suggests the cosmic egg concept. A bodily fluid is the source of the twins and thus gives these figures many archetypal relatives. The blood in question, and the coconuts, represent the chaotic potential for the order that is born of them.

See Also: Bodily Waste or Fluids as Creation Source, **Creation from Chaos**, Culture Heroes in Creation, Duality in Creation, Melanesia, Twins in Creation, Two Creators Motif.

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NEW HEBRIDES

The Melanesian people of the New Hebrides Islands (now the Republic of Vanuatu), northeast of Australia in the South Pacific, preserve their pre-Christian indigenous religion in various myths and legends.

***

There is a legend about two brother-twins, one wise, one foolish. The wise brother was a creator. To preserve the wise brother's creative work, the foolish brother had to be exiled from the world.

***

Little is known of the rest of this story. What stands out is the negative nature of the relationship between the twins, who in other cultures tend to be culture heroes.

Another New Hebrides myth, of the ex nihilo variety with earth-diver aspects, is more complex.

***

In the beginning there was only Naareau the Older existing in the void without the need to eat or sleep. Then Nareau decided to make a woman and she became real as Nei Teakea. Then he thought of a man and the man, Na Atibu, the Rock, became real and the man and the woman mated and produced Naareau the Younger. Naareau the Older then made a gift for his son. That gift was the darkness with Sky and Earth close together. Naareau the Older said his farewells and left his creation for good. Now Naareau the Younger used a song spell to create a hollow between Sky and Earth, and a bat came out of the hollow. Naareau asked the bat to dive back into the hollow and to tell him what was there. The bat did as he was told and reported that there were sleeping people there. Wishing to know who the people were, Naareau sent the bat to name the people and he did so.

Now Naareau was ready to enter the dark world himself. With the bat as his guide he did so. By ordering the people to move, he helped them to gradually emerge from their deaf-mute sleeping state. But the people could not stand because of the lack of space between Sky and Earth. Naareau sent one of the people, Naabawe, to fetch the conger eel, Riiki. Riiki bit the man, so Naareau used a song spell and the arms of an octopus as bait to trap him. He then made the conger eel separate Sky and Earth by pushing up the sky with his snout. With the help of the turtle and the octopus and more song spells in each of the four directions, Sky was pushed away from Earth and creation could continue in the world of light.

***

The separation of Sky and Earth is a constant theme in world mythology. What seem to be shamanistic spells to bring about the separation suggests the shamanistic practices common in the culture that produced the myth. The use of the bat to initiate the dive into the void between Sky and heaven can only remind us of the earth-diver tradition.

See Also: Animals in Creation, Culture Heroes in Creation, **Earth-Diver Creation**, **Ex Nihilo Creation**, Four Directions in Creation, Melanesia, Separation of Heaven and Earth in Creation, Sexual Impulse in Creation, Shamanism and Creation, Thought-based Creation, Twins in Creation.

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NEZ PERCE

At the time of the Lewis and Clark expedition, the Nee-me-poo (Nimipu, "the people") ruled a large territory of the Pacific Northwest in what is now part of Washington, Oregon, and Idaho in the United States. Called the Nez Percé, the "Pierced Noses" by French traders, and Sahaptin or Shahaptian by their neighbors and sometime enemies, the Salishan, the Nez Perce were hunter-gatherers of the Shahaptian language group, which also included the Yakima. The Nez Perce held out against United States encroachment until 1877, when under the famous Chief Joseph (The "Red Napoleon"), they surrendered after a long and desperate retreat.

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Some Nez Perce, like some of their Salishan neighbors, say this about the world's creation. The Sky Chief made the earth out of a lump of clay, and he rolled it out like a piece of dough until it was the size it is now. He covered the earth with soil and made the heavens and the underworld as well. He connected them all with the world tree, an axis mundi. He made animals and a man—a wolf-man. He then made a woman from the man's tail. These were the Indian ancestors.

***

A more complex myth is an animistic one that features Coyote and a monster. In Nez Perce country there is a

sacred mound called the "Heart." After the world was created, a huge monster lay in the valley where the Heart is now. For food the monster sucked in plants and animals for miles around and swallowed them alive, never leaving his resting place in the valley. The animals met to decide what to do but, naturally, were reluctant to approach the monster. There was one animal, however, who had no fear. This was Coyote. For some reason, whenever Coyote would approach the monster, the monster would tell Coyote to go away and would quickly shut its mouth. But now Coyote came up to the monster and hit its mouth, causing it to open briefly. While the mouth was open, Coyote jumped in. Once inside the monster, Coyote found the animals that the great beast had eaten. He quickly built a fire with the pitch and flint he had carried with him, and soon smoke was pouring from all the monster's orifices, providing exits for the animals. Meanwhile, Coyote used his flint to destroy the monster's heart. When the monster was dead, Coyote emerged from the carcass, and with his friend Fox cut up the body to make the various people. From the feet they made the Blackfoot, from the head they made the Crow and Salishan (Flat Heads), and so on. But the beautiful valley, now free of the monster, was empty. Coyote still had blood from the monster's heart on his hands, so he sent Fox to get some water from the river and began to wash his hands. From the drops of blood and water the Nez Perce arose. At the center of the valley the remains of the monster's heart were buried in a mound.

***

The first story is of interest because by telling of woman being created from man's tail it justifies the lesser role of women in what was a patrilineal and patriarchal society. The second myth is one of many creation myths that depict the creation of the world from a monstrous primal entity. The Babylonian and Norse creation stories, for instance, contain such concepts. In this case it is significant that the Nez Perce see themselves as arising from the most important body part of that being; the heart.

See Also: Ancestors in Creation, Animals in Creation, Animistic Creation, Axis Mundi in Creation, Babylonian, Clay-based Creation, Coyote in Creation, **Creation from Chaos**, Dismemberment of Primordial Being as Creation, Okanagan (Isankuafli), Norse, Salishan (Flat Heads), **World Parent Creation**, Yakima.

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NGOMBE (BANGALA)

The Central African people known as the Ngombe or Bangala or Ngala—the "Water people"—live along the Congo River primarily in what is now the Republic of the Congo. Their creator god is Akongo, the Mysterious One; the source of being. What follows is a story of the origins of evil, one that brings together the familiar figures of the corrupted woman and the monster.

***

In the beginning Akongo lived with us in the sky, but he got so tired of human

quarrels that he left and has not been seen since.

Some people tell another tale:

The woman Mbokomu in the sky world was so irritating to Akongo and the people there that Akongo dropped her, her children, and some food down to Earth in a basket. The family planted and did well on Earth, but Mbokomu was afraid her family would die out. She convinced her son to take his sister as a wife. He did so, unwillingly, and his sister became pregnant.

The sister was walking about one day when she met a very hairy but pleasant creature whom she grew to like. His name was Ebenga, and when the sister shaved him he looked quite like a man. Ebenga was evil, however, and he put a curse on the woman and her unborn child. The child was born and grew up to be a witch. He plagued all of the other children born to the brother and sister, as well as their descendants.

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The theme of first woman corrupted by the forces of evil is a common one and suggests a patriarchal view of the world with women as the difficult and weaker sex. This myth also serves as a justification for the incest taboo, as it was probably the initial incestuous relationship that led to evil.

See Also: Animals in Creation, Deus Otiosus or Absconditus in Creation, Devil in Creation, **Ex Nihilo Creation**, Incest in Creation.

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NGURUNDERI

The Ngurunderis are aboriginals living in the Lower Murray River area of southern Australia. As with virtually all Australian aboriginals, their creation myth is a dreaming story, the description of an ancient creative walkabout by sacred ancestors.

***

The great ancestor Ngurunderi canoed down the Murray River in search of his two runaway wives. A giant fish swam ahead of the ancestor, creating the present river out of the tiny stream that it used to be. When Ngurunderi tried to spear the fish, he missed, but the spear became Lenteilin, the Long Island. Later, when the ancestor succeeded in spearing the fish, he cut it up, forming all the different fish the people find today.

Ngurunderi set up camp, but when he sensed the nearness of his wives, he left everything and went in pursuit of them; his canoe became the Milky Way. The wives heard their husband coming and abandoned their own camp in favor of a reed and grass raft, which turned into the reeds and grass trees of the area where they left it on the far side of Lake Albert.

In Kingston, still following his wives, the ancestor was challenged by the sorcerer, Parampari. Victorious after a long fight, Ngurunderi burnt his adversary's body, which remains there today as the great granite boulders.

Ngurunderi continued along, creating islands with his spears and places like the Longkuwar Bluff with his club.

The ancestor caught up with his wives on Granite Island, but they ran to Cape

Jervis, from which point they ran toward the then-connected bit of land now called Kangaroo Island. That island was created when Ngurunderi, in anger, caused waves to sweep across the connecting land, drowning not only the land but also his wives. They became the little Rocky Pages Islands. The Dreaming ended, and Ngurunderi rose into the Milky Way.

***

That the occasion for the dreaming in this case is the chasing of runaway wives suggests a particular attitude towards women, but the running away serves as a catalyst for the inadvertent creation of sacred landmarks in the Aborigine world.

See Also: Ancestors in Creation, Animals in Creation, Australian Aborigine, **Creation from Chaos**, Dreaming as Creation, Etiological Creation Myths, **Ex Nihilo Creation**, Sexual Impulse in Creation.

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Nigerian. *See* Efik; Ijaw (Ijo); Nup; Yoruba

NORSE

The people referred to in the term "Norse Mythology" are called Norse, Norsemen, or Vikings, depending upon the era being discussed. Germanic speaking Norse people lived in Scandinavia and parts of Northern Europe between 200 and 700 C.E. After 700 C.E., when they began raiding and settling in Britain, Iceland, Greenland and elsewhere, they are generally referred to as Vikings, who came to prominence in the 9th and 10th centuries. Different versions and outgrowths of their myths spread into the counties they inhabited, especially, for example, Britain and Germany. Many myths that we call Anglo-Saxon were influenced by Norse myths, as were the myths of Germany, contained in works such as the *Nibelungenlied*.

The primary source for the myths of the Norse people—including the creation myth—is Iceland, where the old Norse religion remained in force long after the rest of Europe had been Christianized. It was not until the year 1000 that the Icelandic Assembly voted to replace the old religion with Christianity. The Norse myths that we know now are contained in the Icelandic text called the *Younger Edda* or the *Prose Edda*, compiled by the Icelandic historian Snorri Sturluson (1173–1241 see below) in about 1220 C.E. Snorri's work is based on much older works from the oral tradition and from the *Elder Edda* or *Poetic Edda*, which was written down between the ninth and twelfth centuries C.E. and re-discovered in 1643. It is sometimes called the *Edda of Saemund*, because it was wrongly attributed to Saemund Sigfusson, a writer of the 12th century.

The Norse creation myth retold by Snorri in the 10th century eddaic poem, the *Voluspa*, is an animistic myth centering on the Ice Giant, Ymir or Imir, from whose dismembered body the world was made.

***

Long ago King Gylfi ruled what is now Sweden. He learned from a wise old woman about the Aesir, the gods who



The Viking hogback tomb. The relief depicts the four dwarves who held up the four corners of the sky. (© Werner Forman/CORBIS)

live in Asgard, or Valhalla. Gylfi disguised himself as an old man, decided to call himself Gangleri, and made his way to Valhalla. There he met the High One, who answered his various questions about the world and its origins.

The High One told Gangleri that once there were two places, one in the south that was all fire and light, and one in the north that was icy and dark. The first was called Muspell and the second Niflheim. The two atmospheres met in an emptiness between them called Ginnungagap. There the hot and the cold mixed and caused moisture to form and life to begin, first as the evil frost giant Ymir. The various worlds of creation were joined by the world tree, the axis mundi known as Yggdrasil

Ymir lay down in Ginnungagap and gave birth to a man and a woman from his armpits; one of his legs mated with the other to make a son. Thus began the family of frost ogres. Some of the melting ice became the cow giant, Auohumla, whose teats flowed with rivers of milk to feed the giant and his family.

As for the cow, she fed on the ice blocks around her. As she licked the ice, a man gradually appeared from it. He was Buri the Strong; he had a son called Bor who married Bestla, a daughter of one of the frost ogres. Bor and Bestla produced the great god Odin and the gods Vili and



An eighth-century Viking stele, with depictions of the Norse god Odin riding Sleipnir, his eight-legged horse, and Valkyries guarding the gates of Valhalla. (© Charles & Josette Lenars/CORBIS)

Ve. These gods killed Ymir, and all the frost ogres were destroyed in a flood from the blood. One giant, Bergelmir, escaped with his wife and family.

The three gods took Ymir's remains to the center of Ginnungagap and turned his body into the earth and his blood into the seas. His bones became the mountains and his teeth and jaws became rocks, stones, and pebbles. The gods turned his skull into the sky, held up at each of the four corners by a dwarf. These are called by the names of the four directions. From Muspell they took sparks and embers and made the sun, moon, and stars, placing them over Ginnungagap

The earth was round and surrounded by the ocean. The gods gave shore lands to the descendants of the surviving giant family. They made a stronghold out of Ymir's eyebrows, and they made clouds out of his brains.

The three gods made man and woman out of two fallen trees, an ash and an elm. Odin breathed life into the new pair. Vili's gift to them was intelligence, and Ve's gifts were sight and hearing. The first man was named Ask; the first woman was Embla. The stronghold, Midgard, became their home, and so they were protected from the cruel giants outside.

***

The following lines are in the *Prose Edda* as remembered from the *Poetic Edda*:

From Ymir's flesh
the earth was made

and from his blood the seas,
crags from his bones,
trees from his hair,
and from his skull the sky.
From his eyebrows
the blessed gods
made Midgard for the sons of men,
and from his brains
were created
all storm-threatening clouds.

— [Reprinted from Snorri Sturluson, trans., *The Prose Edda*, New York: The American-Scandinavian Foundation, 1916. Courtesy The American-Scandinavian Foundation]

***

There is, in addition to the Icelandic myth, another Norse creation myth (perhaps from Northern Germany) that says the sun and moon came from the sparks of the fire world, Muspelheim. The sparks were formed into Maane (moon) and Sol (sun) by their father, Mundilfare. The gods were angry at Mundilfare's presumption, however, and they exiled the children to the sky.

The eddaic creation story calls to mind many other creation mythologies involving the dismemberment of primordial bodies to form the earth, including the early Celtic, Ceramese, Aztec, and Indian. The Celtic, Indian, and Norse creation myth connections can perhaps be traced to common Indo European heritage. The message of all of these mythologies, as grim as they are, is the idea that the earth is built violently from primordial reality, the spirit of which continues to live in it. In the case of the Norse mythology, the spirit of the Ice Giant and his dismemberment pervades a world that is doomed to undergo violent confrontations between the various levels of creation, ending in a cosmic cataclysm known as Ragnarok.

See Also: Animistic Creation, Axis Mundi in Creation, Aztec (Mexica), Celtic, Ceram, Dismemberment of Primordial Being as Creation, Flood in Creation Myths, Four Directions in Creation, Indian, **World Parent Creation**.

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NUGUMUIT

The Nugumuit are Inuit (Eskimo) people who live on Baffin Island on Frobisher Bay in the remote Nunavut territory in far northern Canada. A hunting and fishing people, they traditionally believe in a high god named Anguta, who made everything that is from nothing.

See Also: **Ex Nihilo Creation**, Kodiak, Kukulik, Oqomuit.

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NUP

The Nup people of Nigeria tell an ex nihilo creation story, which, like so many others, tries to explain the mystery of death.

***

First God created tortoises, humans, and stones. He made males and females of each of these, but they could not reproduce. When they got old they just became young again. The creatures wanted children, however. First the tortoises asked for children. God told them that with children would also come death, but the tortoises insisted. They had children, and then death began for them. The humans made the same demand. Finally God gave in, and children and death came to them as well. The stones learned from what they saw happening to the others, so they did not ask God for children, and they received neither children nor death.

***

This myth tells us, in effect, that we living things are death-defined, that death is a necessary aspect of the fertile life. If we reproduce we must die, since reproduction is based on a process by which things are born, experience growth, and then die.

See Also: Animals in Creation, Death Origin in Creation, Etiological Creation Myths, **Ex Nihilo Creation**.

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NYAMWEZI

The Nyamwezi (Wanyamwezi) are an important tribe of what is present-day Tanzania. Traditionally healer/shaman-led animists who stress the connection between clans and their particular ancestors, the Nyamwezi have been influenced by Christianity and Islam, the Nyamwezi tell how the world was created by Shida Matunda and undermined by one of the first women.

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After he created the world out of nothing, Shida Matunda made two wives for himself. After the death of the first wife, the god's favorite, he buried her in her hut, watching over the grave and watering it regularly. Shida Matunda saw a beautiful little plant growing from the grave. He knew now that his dead wife would be reborn.

The second wife, whom Shida Matunda had ordered to stay away from the grave, was jealous, and she stole into the hut and cut down the plant. Blood poured out and filled up the hut. "What have you done, Woman?" the god cried. "You have prevented the rebirth of the first wife, and so you have brought death into the world." So began the way things are.

***

Emerging from this myth is a patriarchal point of view containing a version of the well known story of the world originally corrupted by women. In this case, as in the case of Eve in the Genesis garden, the woman's sin brings about death, a phenomenon that replaces the rebirth possibilities expressed by the growing plant resulting from the god's ritual over his dead wife's grave.

See Also: Ancestors in Creation, Death Origin in Creation, **Ex Nihilo Creation**, Fall from Grace in Creation, Woman as Source of Evil.

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Ojibwe. *See* Anishinabe (Ojibwe, Chippewa)

OKANAGAN (ISANKUAFLI)

The Okanagan, or Isankuafli (the People) are an ancient tribe of the Pacific Northwest, specifically, British Columbia and Washington State. Theirs is an animistic creation-from-formlessness myth in which Earth itself is the primal being; the Mother.

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Old One created a woman as the world. He took the tiny Earth that was first here, rolled it out, and pulled it like dough until it became Earth Woman. Her head was in the west, where the rivers flow and where we go when we die. Trees and other plants are her hair, the soil is her body, stones are her bones, and the wind is her breath. Old One made the animals out of little pieces of her body. He blew on them to give them life.

The Indians, made of red clay, were among these new creatures. Some of them were wicked, so Old One sent his son—some say Jesus—to put things in order. The people killed the son, however, and he went back up to Old One.

Old One sent down Coyote to try to put things to right. He was more successful—he killed monsters, taught the people things they needed to know, and divided them into tribes with different languages. He also made several foolish mistakes, however, so Old One took the form of a wise old man and decided to complete the work of creation himself. He met Coyote on the road, but Coyote refused to recognize him when he said he was Old One, chief of the world. Only when Old One picked up a river and moved it did Coyote recognize him. Then Old One sent Coyote away, thanking him for the work he had done.

Finally, Old One taught the people how to pray so they could talk to him and he to them after he returned to the sky. He told the people that in time Earth Woman would be ancient enough for Old One and the dead to return to her. Then everyone would live together and revere Earth Woman as the Great Mother.

***

In its present form, given especially the mentioning of Jesus, the myth is clearly influenced by white Christian settlers. This seems to be little more than a passing distraction, however. The primary figures here are Old Man, an embodiment of the ubiquitous North American creator—the Great Spirit, and the just as common trickster, Coyote, who acts here as both a culture hero teaching the people and as an underminer of the creator's work. The prominence of Earth Woman suggests a special place for women in the Okanagan religious structure. Here the ever-living Earth Woman *is* the earth itself, Earth is, thus, endowed with deep spiritual reality; it is animistic.

See Also: Animals in Creation, Animistic Creation, Clay-based Creation, Coyote in Creation, **Creation from Chaos**, Culture Heroes

in Creation, Earth Mother, Trickster in Creation, **World Parent Creation**.

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OLMEC

It is now generally agreed upon by scholars that the ancient Olmec, rather than the Maya, are the mother culture of Mesoamerica. Archeological evidence around the Olmec homelands in Tabasco and Veracruz, Mexico, reveal stone tablets and statues from the 1300–400 B.C.E. period that suggest that the Olmecs had a good understanding of mathematics and astronomy, that they had writing, and that it was the Olmecs who invented the Mesoamerican ritual ball game and several of the deities and mythological patterns that we associate with the later Mesoamericans. Among the deities are the Jaguar figure, who is perhaps a supreme being, even a creator; a Maize God, a Rain God, and the Feathered Serpent, who in later cultures would become the god we know as Quetzalcoatl.

A creation myth is suggested on stone tablets. According to these tablets, Olmec creation involves a world tree or and axis mundi and a world center from which a first father is born as maize.

To gain a better sense of what the Olmec creation myth might have been, it is necessary to consider the myths of later Mesoamericans such as the Toltecs and Aztecs; peoples clearly influenced by the Olmec.

See Also: Animals in Creation, Axis Mundi in Creation, Aztec (Mexica), **Creation from Chaos**, Quetzalcoatl, Toltec.

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OMAHA

The Omaha of Nebraska apparently migrated from the East Coast. They settled between the Platte and Niabrara Rivers, west of the Missouri, and survived by hunting and farming. The Omaha creation myth is a mind-based ex nihilo creation.

***

In the beginning there was only Wakonda, the Great Spirit, and all things—plants, animals, and humans—were spirits in his mind. These beings wanted to take form, but they could only wander about in the space of God's mind, which is the space between Heaven and Earth. They tried to live on the sun and then on the moon, but these places were not satisfactory. Finally they descended to Earth, where they found only water. Journeys in the four directions revealed only more water. Then suddenly a great rock emerged from the center and burst into fire, sending water into the air as clouds and leaving some land. Now the creatures had a place to live, and they

became real. They were grateful to Wakonda, and they praised him.

***

Like many of the Plains Indians, the Omaha worship the Great Spirit. The world is created as a fully animistic, sacred space because it emerged directly from the creator's mind.

See Also: Animistic creation, **Ex Nihilo Creation**, Four Directions in Creation, Supreme Being, Thought-based Creation.

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ONONDAGA

One of the Six Nations that form the Iroquois Confederation—the Haudenosaunee (People of the Longhouse)—the Onondaga (People on the Hilltop) live in the northeast on both sides of the New York/Canadian border. They are a matrilineal culture; their clans are led by clan mothers. The Onondagan creation myth has developed over the centuries, and continues to develop, since creation myths must take into account the way things are as well as the way they once may have been. There are elements in this myth of the earth-diver and sky woman motifs so common to Iroquoian speakers and other Northeastern Native Americans.

***

They say that there were once man-beings who lived in the sky of the world above this one, and that a woman-being went there with a comb and began straightening out the hair of one of the man-beings. Soon she became pregnant and the man-being became the first to experience the mystery of death, for with birth must come death. The man-being was placed by his mother in a coffin.

When the woman-being gave birth to a girl, her mother (the Ancient One) asked the woman-being who would be the child's father, but the woman-being did not answer. The child grew, and one day she began crying and would not stop. It was the Ancient One who told her daughter to take the child to the male-being's coffin. When the child saw the coffin she was happy. The corpse of the man-being gave her instructions on the right way to be until she married.

When the girl child herself had a baby called Zephyrs, her husband, a chief, became ill. He sang a song, telling the other man-beings to pull the tree called Tooth that grew near his hut. Through the hole left by the tree, he threw his wife and Zephyrs down to the world below—our world.

The woman-being, Sky Woman, fell and fell and saw only water beneath her. The animals below saw Sky Woman and Zephyrs falling and decided to make land for them. Many animals tried to dive below the waters to get earth, but only Muskrat succeeded, and he died in the process. With the earth he brought up, however, the animals made land on the Turtle's back. Then the flying creatures formed themselves into a huge net in which they caught the falling women, and they brought them safely to the new earth.

Sky Woman and her daughter brought fire and taught the people the art of

hunting. When the daughter had grown she was visited in the night and she soon became pregnant. Just before she gave birth, she heard two male-beings talking inside her body, arguing about how to be born. One came out by the normal way, the other by an armpit. This armpit child killed his mother and told his grandmother the other son had done the deed. Thus, there are good and evil people. These were the first man-beings on Earth.

***

This myth is almost the same as the Iroquoian Mohawk creation myth. The dominance of the Sky Woman is appropriate for matrilineal cultures such as those of the Iroquoian tribes. Sky Woman and her daughter become true culture heroes, teaching their people how to live. They are the first clan mothers. The fact that an evil child is born of the daughter's armpit rather than in the usual manner suggests the abnormality that the child brings into an otherwise stable world.

See Also: Animals in Creation, Cherokee (Tsalagi), Culture Heroes in Creation, **Earth-Diver Creation**, Huron, Mohawk (Kanienkaha), Oneida, Sky Woman Descends, Twins in Creation.

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ONEIDA

Like the Onondaga above, the Oneida (People of the Standing Stone) of New York are members of the Iroquois Confederation. Like the other Iroquois, the Oneida are led culturally by clan mothers, and their Sky Woman. Their earth-diver creation myth has many elements that are present in the creation myths of the other members of the group.

***

In the beginning the earth was covered in water and every place was dark. Only water animals lived down here. The spirits lived in the world above with the Great Spirit. There was a huge apple tree there with deep roots. It happened that one day the Great Spirit uprooted the tree, leaving a great hole in the ground of the upper world. He ordered his daughter to look down through the hole at the dark, water-covered lower world and he asked her to go there. He picked his daughter up and dropped her through the hole. Slowly Sky Woman, as she was now called, floated down towards the world below, shining like a star. The water animals looked up, afraid. At first they hid under the water, but then they came back up and decided they would need a dry place on which Sky Woman could land. Beaver dove into the depths to find soil but drowned in the process. The loon and others failed, too. Finally the muskrat dove, and though he resurfaced dead, he had some mud in his paw. The animals placed the bit of mud on the turtle's back and immediately the turtle and the earth on his back grew into what is now North America. Meanwhile, swans flew up to catch the falling Sky Woman and they brought her safely to the new earth. Almost immediately she gave birth to twins; one was good and the other was so bad that his mother died trying to give birth to him.

The Good Twin, or Good Spirit, as he is called, hung his mother's head in the sky as the Sun. He also used parts of her body to become the Moon and Stars. The rest of her body he buried, making the earth itself sacred and fertile. But for every good thing the Good Spirit did, his evil brother, the Bad Spirit, did the opposite. The Good Spirit made beautiful plants and the Evil Spirit put thorns and knots on them. The Evil Spirit countered his brother's deer and bear with poisonous snakes, his beautiful rivers with rocks to cause dangerous rapids. Finally, the Good Spirit made humans out of clay, and the Evil Spirit mocked that creation by creating monkeys.

The Good Spirit now placed a protective power over his whole creation and ordered his brother to respect the protection. When the Evil Spirit refused, the Good Spirit challenged him to a fight; the winner to rule the world. After many days of brutal fighting, the Good Spirit prevailed and condemned his brother to a dark underground cave. Unfortunately, however, the Evil Spirit's servants come up to this world and cause problems, especially by making humans do evil things. This is why all of us can be evil as well as good.

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As similar as this myth is to the other Iroquoian myths, it places more emphasis on the duality inherent in the universe and gives Sky Woman a less prominent place than she usually has; for instance, in the Onondagan myth.

See Also: Animals in Creation, Animistic Creation, Clay-based Creation, Duality in Creation, **Earth-Diver Creation**, Sky Woman Descends, Twins in Creation, Two Creators Motif.

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OQOMIUT

The Oqomiut are one of several Central Inuit (Eskimo) tribes. They have traditionally survived by hunting and fishing. Not surprisingly, their creation myth is sea-oriented. They tell the myth of a woman, Sedna, who is the primary force in the creation of the world's creatures. As for the world itself, it is only known that it was created ex nihilo by Anguta.

***

Once there was Anguta, who lived with his daughter, the beautiful and much-desired Sedna. When a great seabird, a fulmar, flew over her one spring day and urged her to follow him over the sea to his home, Sedna went. When she got there, however, she was horrified by the fulmar's foul tent and lack of food. She called in despair for her father, and after a year had passed, he came with the warm winds that broke up the ice. He killed the fulmar and put his daughter in his boat for the journey home.

When the other fulmars found the body of their chief they mourned—as they still do today with their sad cries—and they became angry. They searched the sea for the murderer and blew up a huge storm when they saw the boat of

Sedna's father. To save himself, the father threw his daughter overboard and chopped her fingers when she tried to hold onto the boat. Parts of the fingers fell into the water and became whales; other parts became other fish and sea creatures. Finally Sedna fell into the sea and the storm subsided. Sedna was not dead, however, and she climbed back into the boat.

Sedna did not love her father any longer, and when he was asleep, she ordered her dogs to bite off his hands and feet. This they did before he woke up. In fury, Anguta cursed everything and everyone, and the earth swallowed him, the dogs, and Sedna. Just before going down, Sedna created the deer.

Sedna, Anguta, and the dogs now live under the world in Adlivun. Sedna rules there, and Anguta hobbles around there with no feet. When people die, they go to Sedna's house in Adlivun. The bad ones have to sleep next to Anguta, who pinches them.

***

It is of interest that little is said here of the creation of the world itself and that the creator, Anguta, finds himself at the mercy of the sea birds—birds he presumably created. It is Sedna, his daughter who becomes the animistic source of many of the creatures of the Inuit world when her father—the creator—chops off her fingers. It is not surprising that Sedna no longer loves her father and orders *his* dismemberment. Finally, it is significant that it is Sedna, not Anguta, who rules the land of the dead. The implication is that the original world created by Anguta is a cruel place, saved only by the hunted creatures provided by the sympathetic Sedna.

See Also: Animals in Creation, Animistic Creation, Dismemberment of Primordial Being as Creation, **Ex Nihilo Creation**, Inuit, Sacrifice in Creation, Sexual Impulse in Creation, **World Parent Creation**.

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Orphic. *See* Greek

OSAGE

Originally an American Indian nation of the Midwest, the Siouan-speaking Osage eventually migrated to the Great Plains and to Oklahoma. They thought of themselves as children of the sun and moon, and their myth features the familiar earth-diver creation figure of the fall from Heaven, a figure popular also among the Iroquoian peoples.

***

In the beginning the People lived in the sky. When they asked the sun and moon who their parents were, the sun said he was their father, and the moon said she was their mother. The moon said it was time for them to go down to the earth. They did this, but there was only water there, so they could not land. They floated in the air calling for help, but no one came.

Finally the elk, one of the animals floating down to Earth with the people, came to everyone's assistance by letting himself fall into the water. As he sank he called on the winds to blow away the

waters until they flew off as mist, leaving land. The elk rolled in the first mud that appeared, and from his loose hairs that remained in the soil, all the plants and trees grew.

There are some Osage who say that the first people came from a union between two animals, Beaver Girl and Snail Boy. These Osage say that Beaver Girl and Snail Boy produced a son and a daughter that were neither snail nor beaver, but Osage. These were the first people, naturally enough, and they made houses that look like beaver houses

***

Traditionally the Osage lived in longhouses rather like those of the Iroquois, whose creation myths the Osage myth resembles with its emphasis on the fall from the sky and the important role of animals in the creation of the earth.

See Also: Animals in Creation, **Earth-Diver Creation**, Sun in Creation, **World Parent Creation**.

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PAPAGO (TOHONO O'ODHAM)

The Papago (Bean People), famous for their fine baskets, share an Uto-Aztecan language (O'odham) with their Pima (Akimel O'odham) neighbors in the Arizona desert. One of their creator gods was a mysterious being known as Elder Brother, who was helped by the familiar trickster, Coyote, and a mysterious figure called Earth Magician. The Papago creation myth is told only at night in winter when the snakes are asleep, since they would be offended at the revelation of the mysteries if they were to hear it. Only certain people can tell the Papago creation myth. In each village there is an old man who sings and tells the sacred story while the men smoke a ceremonial cigarette. During the recitation, no movement or noise can be made or the story-telling must stop.

***

Children are told a story of the culture hero woman of ancient times who gave birth to the sacred twins in the mountains. The twins grew immediately, and their mother sent them to the nest of the eagle to get arrow feathers. Then she showed them how to make arrows out of wood. At each stage the woman sang into life whatever has been made: "Now bows are made/Arrows are made/Into the West they go/Watch them fly, my boys." The mother sent the twins for canes with which to make flutes, and they became the flute players who lured and married the daughters of Buzzard, the desert bird. Buzzard's companion, Blue Hawk, killed the twins and sang of his own power to destroy.

One of the girls, who became pregnant, gave birth to a hero who took revenge by killing Buzzard, singing, "Joy comes to the man who kills his enemy." He took the scalp of Buzzard to the grandmother, and they went off together

to the far country. The grandmother and the hero were pursued by the now angry Buzzard girls, who sang the song of crazy women with painted faces. The hero made a bridge across the ocean with his bow, which is the rainbow. He and the grandmother crossed the bridge and then twisted it to throw off the vengeful women. They fell into the sea and turned into birds.

***

Another story goes like this: In the beginning there was only water everywhere and complete darkness above it. Darkness came down and rubbed with the water and a child was born. He was First Man or Earth Medicine Man and he quickly created much of our animal life. But the animals complained of the darkness, so First Man asked them what they would like to have created to make things lighter. The animal people said "a sun," and soon the sun appeared, giving heat and light. Then, after making the moon and stars, First man went away.

Now Sky came down several times to visit Earth, as Darkness had earlier visited. Water and several offspring arrived. Elder Brother was the first child of Sky and Earth. He was followed by Buzzard and, most important, Coyote. Elder Brother, with Coyote's help, set about finishing creation. It was Elder Brother who made people out of clay and gave them the beautiful sunset that they watch to this day.

***

The interaction of Darkness and Water, and Sky and Earth as the primordial world parents, ties this myth to many others around the world, although lacking here is the violent separation of the parents that so often occurs. Perhaps this is because of the vastness of the southwestern sky and desert, in which sky and earth seem to be one entity.

See Also: Animals in Creation, Clay-based Creation, Coyote in Creation, Culture Heroes in Creation, Deus Otiosus or Absconditus in Creation, Earth Mother, Pima (Akimal O'odham), Primordial Waters in Creation, Separation of Heaven and Earth in Creation, Sky Father, Trickster in Creation, Twins in Creation, Two Creators Motif, **World Parent Creation**, Zuni.

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PAPUA NEW GUINEA

The population of the island of New Guinea, including the present country of Papua New Guinea, which forms the eastern half of this southwest Pacific island, is highly diverse. These are fragments of myths from two Papua tribes, perhaps influenced by Melanesian traditions.

***

They say the first humans came out of a palm tree. It was Gainji who heard the people talking in their many languages in

the palm. When they were out, the people went away in their own language groups, and so it is today.

***

The Papua Kiwai people say that Marungere was the creator. He gave people the pig and taught them about the sacred ceremonies.

***

Central to these fragments are the themes of emergence, the differentiation of ethnic groups, and the importance of ceremonies.

See Also: **Creation from Chaos**, Melanesia.

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PAWNEE

The Native American Pawnee (Paneassa, Pariki) people are traditionally hunters of the Nebraska and Kansas plains. They are famous for their sacred medicine bundles and for their dome-shaped houses. Decimated by smallpox and the loss of hunting grounds with the arrival of European Americans, much of the tribe has resettled in Oklahoma. The Pawnee ex nihilo creation story is traditionally told during the spring renewal ceremonies. At this time the bundle of the holy Star Woman, Yellow Buffalo Calf, is opened. It contains ears of corn and the sacred pipe. During the ceremonies, the priests praise Mother Corn and recreate the world through a holy dance and a singing of the creation story. Long ago, the Skidi Pawnee would sacrifice a prisoner boy or girl to the Morning Star as part of the holy spring rites.

***

In the beginning was space itself, Tirawahat (Tirawa). It was he who organized the gods in creation. He placed Sun in the east and Moon in the west. Evening Star was to be the mother and was placed in the west. Morning Star was the brave in the east who would chase the star people into the west. Then Tirawahat made four other stars into the supporters of the four corners of the world. He gave the wind, the thunder, the lightning, and the clouds to Evening Star, and they sang, rattled, and danced as Tirawahat created the earth.

He dropped a pebble into the clouds and there was water. The earth-supporters struck the water with their clubs and Earth was formed. To populate the earth, Evening Star took Morning Star as her husband, and they produced Mother of Humanity. Sun and Moon produced Father of Humanity. Evening Star then made the sacred bundle, and the elements—clouds, wind, thunder, and lightning—taught the new people the sacred songs and dances they still perform, calling it the Thunder Ceremony.

Some say the elements became Paruhti, who crosses over the barren winter earth and brings the new life of spring.

Still others, who mistrust the power of women, say Evening Star, or West Star Woman, had to be overpowered by Morning Star, the Great Star, before creation could be accomplished. Followed by his brother, who carried the sacred bundle, Morning Star headed west toward

Evening Star, who moved along luring Morning Star toward her. When Morning Star got close to her, however, Evening Star placed things in his way to hinder and tease him. For instance, once she beckoned to him, and as he approached she caused the earth to open and all the waters of the heavens to fall down into the mouth of the great serpent. Morning Star won out by throwing a ball of fire into the serpent's mouth. When he got to the lodge of Evening Star, he had to overcome the stars of the four directions. Then he had his way with Evening Star.

***

This is an etiological myth in the sense that it explains not only the existence of the world but of certain elements of the world peculiar to the Pawnee—elements such as the sacred bundles and the Evening Star-Morning Star relationship. The Star story reflects a struggle for cultural superiority between men and women.

See Also: Etiological Creation Myths, **Ex Nihilo Creation**, Four Directions in Creation, Sexual Impulse in Creation.

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Pelasgian. *See* Greek

PENOBSCOT

The Penobscot Indians of Maine were once part of a larger confederation known as the Wabanaki Federation. The Penobscot sided with the French against the English in the pre-revolutionary wars and with the American colonists against the British in the Revolution itself. Their numbers were decimated by European diseases and only recently have they received back some of their lost land. The Penobscot once spoke Abnaki-Penobscot, an Iroquoian language. Their creation myth features a popular Native North American figure, the Corn Mother.

***

In the beginning the creator, the All-Maker, created a helper from a wave in the primeval waters. Helper-to-All-Maker helped the All-Maker create the world—the plants, the animals, the mountains, the rivers, the forests. Then one day, as they were working, some dew fell on the leaf of a magical plant and, warmed by the sun, the plant produced a beautiful young woman, who was First Mother. First Mother mated with Helper-to-All-Maker and the first people were born. The people were guided in their lives by First Mother, but soon there were too many people and the food ran out and First Mother became terribly sad. There was only one hope, she told her husband. You must kill me and then do as I say. Her husband refused and went to the All-Maker for advice. "You must do as she says," said the creator. So Helper-to-All-Maker returned to his wife and agreed to do as she said. First Mother instructed him in detail, telling him to kill her when the sun was highest in the sky and then have her sons drag her over the empty parts of the earth by her long silky hair, thus scraping the

flesh from her body. Then they were to go away and come back after seven moons. When they came back they would find the food of her flesh. Returning in seven moons, the people found that the flesh of First Mother had come to life as beautiful tall plants with silken hair and wonderful fruit—the delicious and nutritious fruit of the flesh of First Mother, now known as Corn Mother. Following the mother's earlier instructions, they saved some of the kernels of the fruit and planted them each year, and so Corn Mother returned to them each year as a result.

***

Technically, this is an ex nihilo myth since All-Maker is just that—the creator of all things, but the Corn Mother aspect of the myth is a world parent myth in that Corn Mother is the original mother and her sacrifice gives continued life to the people. In later years, missionaries would bring the story of another sacrificial victim who the missionaries said had died for the people. For many, this myth of Jesus would replace the old Corn Mother myth, but the myth retained power in the corn so important to the Native North Americans. For many, corn remains a food deeply endowed with the animistic power that can be traced to the sacrifice of the Corn Mother.

See Also: Animistic Creation, Corn Mother, Culture Heroes in Creation, Dismemberment of Primordial Being as Creation, **Ex Nihilo Creation**, Primordial Waters in Creation, Sacrifice in Creation, Sexual Impulse in Creation, **World Parent Creation**.

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PERSIAN (IRANIAN)

Not a great deal is known about the pre-Zoroastrian mythology of Iran, although there are clear connections with the mythology of ancient India of the early Aryan or Vedic period, Aryans who moved into India and Persia having lived in close proximity at the end of the third millennium B.C.E. For example, Yima, a solar deity (who becomes the Zoroastrian Jamshid), is similar in name to the Vedic Yama.

***

Yima was a god of fertility who used a golden arrow to pierce the earth and thus make it pregnant. He then caressed the earth with a golden scourge and it doubled in size. Yima married his sister and was punished for this sin by being killed by the serpent, Ahzi Dahak.

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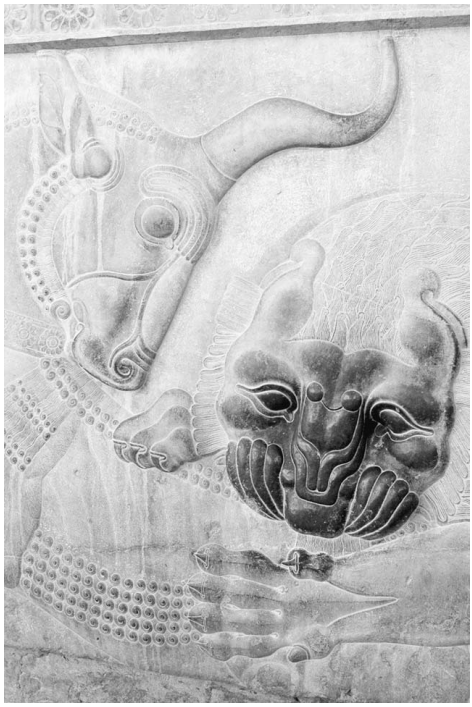
The mythology of early Iran was changed by the emergence of Zoroastrianism in the sixth century B.C.E.

See Also: **Creation from Chaos**, Incest in Creation, Indian, Sexual Impulse in Creation, Zoroastrian.

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Phillipines. *See* Bagobo



Angra Mainyu lion kills the primeval bull in Hall of Audience at Xerxes palace in Iran. (© Alberto Paredes / Alamy)

PHOENICIAN

The Phoenicians were a people who perhaps originated in the ancient Mediterranean world and who settled in Canaan on what is now the Lebanese coast, spreading their influence widely in that world in the second millennium B.C.E. The term Phoenician is sometimes used synonymously with Canaanite. The Phoenicians, who were highly successful merchants and traders, spoke a Semitic language and developed an alphabet that was adopted by the Greeks and spread to North Africa and Europe.

Sanchoniathon, a Phoenician philosopher-scholar of the city of Byblos, who may or may not have existed, is credited with the telling of the creation myth below. The myth is, in fact, only a fragment of a work translated by historian Philo Byblius in the first century C.E. and preserved in the *Praeparatio Evangelica* by the 3rd and early 4th century bishop and enthusiastic Christian apologist, Eusebius of Caeserea in Palestine. According to Eusebius, Philo claimed that the mysterious Sanchoniathon had discovered the Phoenician myths in various temples of Byblos in what is present-day Lebanon

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The god Taautus, who discovered writing, is said to have revealed the following myth: In the beginning there was only dark Chaos. Out of an unknowing Chaos emerged Love and from Love and Chaos came Mot (Matter), the Great Mother of all that has been created in the world. Living things were at first lifeless, but eventually the acquired intelligence and were called Zophashamin. They were egg-like beings that were the shining lights of the sky. The heat of the sun and the moisture of the earth caused great storms—an earthly chaos—until the Zophashamin came to Earth and bred with the female inhabitants. Under the supervision of Taautus, creation continued in Byblos.

***

This philosophical myth is of dubious authenticity. In all likelihood it is the product of an imaginative individual mind rather than of a culture as a whole. In general, Phoenician mythology is closely associated with that of the other Canaanites.

See Also: Canaanite, Cosmic Egg in Creation, **Creation from Chaos**.

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PIMA (AKIMAL O'ODHAM)

The Uto Aztecan (O'odham) speaking Pima, cultural and physical neighbors of the Papago (Tohono O'odham) of southern Arizona, have a creation myth that shares many characteristics with the Papago myth as well as with the creation myth of another Arizona tribe, the Yuma (Quechan). The Piman creation myth, like the Yuman, features a dying god figure. It also makes use of the emergence theme.

***

At the beginning of time Earth Maker (some say it was Great Magician) made the sky and the earth, who mated and produced Elder Brother. Elder Brother, assisted by Coyote, created humanity after an earlier people was washed away by a great flood.

***

There are many stories of the human creation. One says that Earth Maker's humans were badly made, and that Earth Maker descended into the earth after an argument over this with Elder Brother. According to this version, Elder Brother created the Hohokam people after Earth Maker's death, but he disrupted their harmony by molesting maidens during the puberty ceremony. He was killed for his sin either by the people themselves or by Buzzard.

Elder Brother came back to life, went with the sun into the underworld, and brought up the Piman people, who defeated the Hohokam in battle. Before battles, the Pimans always told the story of Elder Brother's revival and his leading of an army out of the underworld.

Some of the Pimans say it was Earth Maker who, with Coyote's misguided assistance, created humankind According to this version, on his first try, Earth Maker modeled a little man out of clay and put it in the oven, but Coyote changed its shape and it became a dog. On the second try Earth Maker made two figures, but Coyote urged him to take them out of the oven too soon and they were underdone. These were sent away as white people to other lands. The third batch Earth Maker overcooked on Coyote's advice, and the people came out dark brown. They were sent across the ocean to another land. For the final batch Earth Maker ignored Coyote's advice and the people came out perfectly toned. These, of course, were the Pima, and Earth Maker was satisfied.

***

In an aside that puts the historically oppressive white people in their place, Earth Maker sends underdone humans into the world as whites. The properly done humans were Pimans. This myth in general is an expression of historical events (the Hohokam-Piman struggle) and Piman ways (the puberty ceremony). The person of Elder Brother, a Christ-like resurrection figure here, resembles the Elder Brother who, as son of the creator, is also sent to retrieve the people out of the darkness of the pre-emergence world. There is indication in both of these Elder Brother myths of Christian missionary influence.

See Also: Animals in Creation, Clay-based Creation, Coyote in Creation, **Emergence Creation**, Flood in Creation Myths, Imper-

fect or Accidental Creation, Papago (Tohono O'odham), Trickster in Creation, Two Creators Motif, Zuni.

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POLYNESIAN

The people who would become Polynesians and Micronesians probably began their migrations some 3500 years ago—perhaps originating in Taiwan or elsewhere in East Asia. Developing amazing sailing skills, they made their way across the Pacific, passing through the islands of the Melanesians and, in the case of the Polynesians, gradually settling in Fiji, Tonga, Samoa, Tahiti, New Zealand (Maori), and, finally, Easter island and Hawaii, completing the process in about 1000 C.E.

***

The most common of the Polynesian creation myths—of which there are several in connection with particular islands, with many variations of plot and names—describes the god Tane as an artist-creator. It was Tane, for instance, who made the first woman—out of red clay. She became the mother of humanity by Tane, who then committed incest with their daughter. The first male was named Tiki or Ki'i.

***

There are also more complex myths, however.

***

Many Polynesians say that in the beginning there was Rangi and Papa (Heaven and Earth) coupled in darkness. Their offspring wandered about creation but could not see it because there was no light. They held council, and the angriest of the children, Tumatauenga, suggested killing the World Parents. His brother, Tane-mahutu, suggested the simpler process of separating the parents. Only the god of winds and storms voted against this plan.

Rongo-ma-tane, the god of cultivation, tried to stand up to separate the parents, but he failed. Tangaroa, ocean god of fish and snakes, tried next but also failed. The



An old label describes the figure as a depiction of the Rarotongan god Te Rongo and his three sons. It has also been suggested that the figure represents the Polynesian god of creation, Tangaroa. (© British Museum / Art Resource, NY)

same thing happened when other gods tried, until Tanemahutu, god of forests and flying things, stood on his head and, with his feet, pushed his father up from his mother as they cried out in agony.

Now there was light and the people were revealed. The wind god was angry, however, and he sent forth a terrifying series of storms and hurricanes to punish his brothers. The various offspring of Rangi and Papa, led by the forest god, Tane, and the ocean god, Tangaroa, argued over what to do. Some chose to go to land, some chose going out to sea. Tane gave his children canoes and nets so they might catch the children of Tangaroa, and sometimes Tangaroa swallowed up Tane's people. It is still this way today between the children of Tane and Tangaroa.

Eventually the fierce brother, Tu-matauenga, who had originally advocated killing Rangi and Papa, overcame the wind god and ate all of the original gods. Tu-matauenga is, in reality, the form called man, and after he ate his brothers, he turned them into food for his offspring. This is what the original gods are today.

***

Some Polynesians—especially in Hawaii and New Zealand—say that the last son of Rangi and Papa (Heaven and Earth) was Maui, who, like the Greek god Prometheus, brought fire to humankind and tried to give them immortality.

Still another South Pacific myth says that the people live in a huge coconut shell.

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In the depths of the shell's interior lives the demon-woman, Vari-ma-te-tekere or Very Beginning. She made the first human being, Vatea, from a piece of her body. The father of humans and gods alike, Vatea was half man and half fish. His name means noon, and his eyes are said to be the sun and moon. Vatea was given the perfect middle land between brightness and gloom. Later he would marry the well-known Polynesian goddess, Papa (Foundation).

Out of another bit of herself, the Great Mother made Tinirau (Innumerable), who was also half man and half fish and was given the Sacred Isle (Motu-Tapu) as his home.

Out of her body the mother made many other beings and places for them to live. She even made Raka (Trouble), who controls the winds. Her last child was the beloved daughter, Tu-metua or Tu, to whom the moon is sacred. Her nephew was the god Tangaroa (Taaroa).

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What stands out in these cultural dreams is the way in which they reflect cultural history, especially the struggle between advocates among the Polynesians of settlement as opposed to further ocean exploration. It is also notable that in one myth the god who became man eventually ate all of his brothers—the original gods—and that these gods have become food for the people. This event reflects the attitude of some Polynesians towards the old religion, in which cannibalism could have played a role. Some remain loyal to the Great Mother or to the god Tangaroa. In short, the Polynesian myths. taken collectively as a body of scripture, represent many conflicting

views of the universe and its laws, some before the advent of Christianity, for instance, and some after it.

See Also: Animals in Creation, Animistic Creation, Clay-based Creation, **Creation from Chaos**, Deus Faber Creation, **Ex Nihilo Creation**, Fiji Islands, Hawaiian, Goddess as Creator, Incest in Creation, Maori, Maui, Samoan, Separation of Heaven and Earth in Creation, Sexual Impulse in Creation, Tahitian, Tonga, Tuamotuan, **World Parent Creation**.

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POMO

The Pomo peoples populated the northern coast of California. They practiced shamanism centered around a supernatural figure they called Kuksu, who made himself known at ceremonies such as healing and puberty rituals. An animistic society, the Pomo found spiritual vitality in all aspects of creation. In one ex nihilo myth with many animistic world parent aspects, they say the creator was Old Man Madumda.

***

One day Madumda decided to make the world. He wanted advice from his older brother, Kuksu, so he plucked hairs from his head and asked them to lead him to where Kuksu was. He held up the hairs to each of the four directions, and it was to the south they flew. Madumda followed them on his cloud and spent the time smoking his pipe until he got to Kuksu's house. There, as is proper, the brothers smoked the pipe four times before speaking.

Then Madumda scraped skin from his armpit, rolled it up, and gave it to Kuksu, who placed it between his toes. Kuksu took some skin from his armpit, rolled it up, and gave it to Madumda, who placed it between his toes. Each blew four times on his little ball of skin, and then the two gods mixed the two balls with a little of their hair.

They stood up and faced the four directions and the up and down, then proclaimed the creation to come. Madumda took the ball and left as Kuksu sang the ancient creation song for the first time. Madumda sang, too, as he flew home on his cloud, with the ball strung through his earlobe. Then he slept for eight days, during which time the ball grew and became the earth. Madumda awoke and threw it into the air. Then he smoked his pipe and threw it, burning, into the sky, where it became the sun. In the new light he walked about creating things as we know them—the mountains, trees, valleys, rocks, lakes, seas, plants, animals, and so forth. By rolling the earth one way and then another, he made night and day.

One day he decided to make the people. First he made some stubby little people out of rocks, then some beautiful long-haired people out of his hair. He made some bird people out of feathers and some hairy deer people out of his armpit hair. In fact, he made all kinds of people out of all kinds of material. Finally he made naked

people like us out of little pieces of sinew planted between some hills. Madumda gave these people their land and taught them how to eat and live.

In time the people began to misbehave, killing each other and not caring well enough for their children, so Madumda sent a great flood to get rid of them. When they were all gone Madumda wished for a village and there was one. He filled this village with people from his thoughts, but these people also went bad, so Madumda sent a great fire to destroy them.

Then he made new people out of willow wands. He taught them how to hunt with bows and arrows, how to make baskets, and how to eat before he went away to his northern home. These people also went bad and had to be destroyed—this time by ice. Then he made another willow wand batch of people and went away again.

After a time he was amazed to learn in his dream that these people, too, were all wrong. Kuksu advised Madumda to destroy these people with wind, which he did. Only the ground squirrel escaped in his hole.

Madumda made new people out of willow wands. This time he made many groups that spoke different languages. He taught them their dances and ceremonies and he taught them how to behave and how to eat, weave, hunt, and grow things. He ordered the coyotes to watch over the villages. He also gave all of the animals their particular places. Finally, he left the world, warning the people to behave properly. This is our last chance.

***

The complex ritual performed by the creator and Kuksu, the embodiment of shamanism, reflects the importance the Pomo attach to rituals. Even the creator turns to the master shaman for advice. His singing of the ancient creation song for the first time established the protocol for reestablishing stability after cultural mishaps. This aspect is reflected in the several creations that follow the destruction of humanity after their falls from grace. The implication is that rituals will help to preserve the people who now have their last chance.

See Also: Animistic Creation, Culture Heroes in Creation, **Ex Nihilo Creation**, Fall from Grace in Creation, Flood in Creation Myths, Four Directions in Creation, Imperfect or Accidental Creation, Shamanism and Creation, Thought-based Creation, **World Parent Creation**.

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PUEBLO PEOPLE

The Pueblo people comprise many groups of Native Americans who live in villages (pueblos) along the Rio Grande River in New Mexico. Most of these people speak the Keres language, but some speak Tewa (also Tiwa or Towa). The Zunis, Hopis, Acoma, and Laguna tribes farther west are also considered Pueblo peoples. All of these groups know at least one version of the following emergence myth.

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Long ago when the earth was soft, all beings could communicate with each other, and the kachina (spirits) came in person to dance and sometimes even to fight. Coyote himself behaved in that golden age. The people say that in Old Oraibi it was possible to grow corn in a day, and that at Isleta water came out of rocks in profusion. The Keres mothers had seeds on their skins, seeds that grew immediately when planted. The people were perfect in those days and so was life.

It was Sun who called the people up from one world to the next. Eventually there were troubles, and now people are not perfect and corn does not grow so easily.

***

As always in the myths of the Pueblo peoples, there is a nostalgic sense of a better time and a sense that people caused their own problems.

See Also: Acoma (Aa'ku), Animals in Creation, Coyote in Creation, **Emergence Creation**, Hopi, Keres, Laguna (Kawaik), Sun in Creation, Zuni.

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Pygmy. *See* Efe

Quiché-Mayan. *See* Mayan

ROMAN

Traditionally, Roman mythology has been linked closely to Greek mythology, the assumption being that Roman gods were simply versions of the Greek gods. Thus, Jupiter was really Zeus, Minerva was really Pallas Athena. In fact, until the 6th century B.C.E. the Romans did not have developed anthropomorphic deities. Gods were nebulous powers of the universe. In keeping with this tendency, the ancient Romans did not have a developed creation of the world myth. It is true that contact with various cultures in the course of Roman expansion led to an elaboration and anthropomorphization of Roman myths, and a dominant influence beginning in the 6th century B.C.E. was the complex mythology of Greece. The primary creation myth that has come down to us from Greece is the one told by the poet Hesiod. In the first century B.C.E., Ovid (43 B.C.E.–17 C.E.), the great Roman poet whose *Metamorphoses* is a primary source for Roman mythology, created a version of that myth, including in it the familiar elements of the separation of Earth and Heaven, the war in Heaven, and the Fall. It is somehow more orderly and less supernatural than the Greek creation, however. It reflects a more scientific and skeptical age. Ovid's myth is a creation ex nihilo or creation from chaos story.

***

In the beginning was the formless and random mass we call chaos. There was no sun, there were no stars, there was nothing of permanent shape, and everything got in the way of everything else. At some point, a profound natural force, a god, separated Earth from Heaven, and earth from the waters, and developed harmony (cosmos) out of chaos. Ether went up to the highest place; then came air, and finally heavy earth, which attracted all the gross elements of creation, sank to the bottom, and was held in place



She-wolf nursing Romulus and Remus, ca. 500–480 B.C.E. (© Bettmann/CORBIS)

by the surrounding seas. Earth itself was shaped into a great ball and arranged into the areas of the world.

When everything was ready, the Creator, or some say Prometheus, decided to make humankind to watch over creation. The first man was made out of rainwater and some of the higher heavenly elements still found on Earth; he was made in the Creator's image.

At first there was the Golden Age, when everything was perfect in Heaven and on Earth. Humans ate freely of the abundant fruits of the earth.

Later there were struggles in Heaven, and Jove (Jupiter) replaced Saturn as the king there. The seasons developed on Earth, and a bit of hardship. Agriculture was practiced. This was the Silver Age. Then came the Bronze Age, during which humans were good still, but turned to the arts of war. The last age was the Iron Age, in which goodness was overwhelmed by evil. There was war, greed, hardship, and disloyalty. No one could be trusted, and love died among humans. There were also wars in Heaven during this time, between the forces of Olympus and those of the ancient giants. After settling the affairs of Heaven, the gods decided to destroy humanity on Earth. This they did with a great flood. Only a guiltless couple, Deucalion and Pyrrah, were saved in a boat so they could be the parents of a new human creation.

***

Of more concern to the Romans than the universal creation was the subject of the creation of Rome, and two primary stories emerged to describe that founding. In his *De Republica*, the statesman Cicero (106 B.C.E.–43 B.C.E.) told the story of how Rome was founded by the twins, Romulus and Remus, known to the Greeks as Rhomos (Rome) and Rhomulos (Roman).

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The twins were the offspring of a favorite Roman god, Mars, and the vestal virgin/earth goddess Rhae Silvia. Rhae had been forced to be a virgin by her ruthless father who feared a rival to his throne if his daughter had children. Mars was not to be diverted from his amorous intentions with regard to Rhae, however, and the twins were born. The evil king, mirroring evil kings before and after, attempted to dispose of the children—in this case, by placing them in a small vessel and releasing them into the Tiber River. When the vessel ran aground, the twins were discovered by a female wolf, which suckled them. Eventually they would found the city of Rome on the spot where they had been saved by the wolf. When the twins quarreled, Remus was killed and the city took its name from Romulus.

***

Another Roman origin story was told most famously by the poet Virgil (Publius Virgilius Maro, 70–19 B.C.E.) in his epic poem, the *Aeneid.* According to the tradition followed by Virgil, the founding of Rome was prepared for by Aeneas, a Trojan warrior who fled Troy after its defeat by the Greeks. Aeneas experienced many adventures prior to his arrival in Italy. There he fought a war with local inhabitants, married a princess, Lavinia, founded Lavinia, and prepared the way for his son, Ascanius, said to be a direct ancestor of Julius Caesar, and therefore, of Virgil's patron, Augustus Caesar, to found Rome itself.

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The son of Anchises and the goddess Venus, Aeneas was an appropriate foundation on which to build the origin myth of Rome in the context of that city's imperial power and sense of its own importance.

See Also: Animals in Creation, **Creation from Chaos**, Fall from Grace in Creation, Flood in Creation Myths, Greek, Separation of Heaven and Earth in Creation, Sexual Impulse in Creation, Twins in Creation.

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ROMANIAN (RUMANIAN)

The origins of the Romanian people and languages have long been in dispute. The most popular theory suggests that out of the cultural and linguistic mingling that resulted from the Second Century C.E. wars between Rome and the Dacian people in southwestern Europe an ethnic group of Daco-Romans emerged—a

group that became the people we call Romanians, who make up the majority population in Romania and Moldova today. Others dispute lasting Roman influence and stress a post-Roman evolution of Balkan Nomads.

The myth below is an ex nihilo myth with deus faber elements.

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God made Heaven and then, after measuring the space underneath with a ball of thread, he began to form the earth. A mole asked to help, and God gave him the thread to hold while he wove the patterns of the earth. Sometimes the mole would let out too much thread, and finally the earth grew too large for the space under Heaven. The mole was so upset that he hid under the earth. God sent the bee to look for him; he wanted the mole's advice on what to do about the mistake. The bee found the mole but the mole just laughed at the idea of advising God. The bee, however, hid in a flower and overheard the mole mumbling about what he would do if he were God. "I would squeeze the earth," he said. "That would make mountains and valleys and make it smaller at the same time." When the bee heard this, he went directly to God and told him. God did what the mole had said, and everything fit fine.

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Another Romanian myth is of the earth-diver variety. In the beginning, it says, there were only God, Satan, and the primeval waters—no earth.

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God sent Satan into the watery depths to find bits of soil with which to begin creating Earth. But Satan failed because all the time he was thinking of creating the world for himself. Finally, after three failed attempts, he dove in God's name as well as his own and succeeded in bringing up a few grains of earth under his fingernails. God made a ball out of this and then fell asleep. Now Satan thought he could take the ball of earth, but every time he touched it, it grew until the waters were displaced. Waking up, God discovered that there was no longer enough room for the waters. He called on help from the wise hedgehog, whom he had created earlier, but the hedgehog refused, believing that God should know everything. However, another creature—the bee—overheard the hedgehog murmuring that God would have to create valleys and mountains so that rivers could relieve the pressure of the waters. The bee informed God of this and creation continued.

***

This earth-diver myth suggests a society of shepherds and agriculturalists with a decidedly domestic and earth-centered view of the world. The presence of a Devil figure and the familiar aspects of the animal diving for the earth-based source of creation suggests a cultural connection with peoples of central Asia.

See Also: Animals in Creation, Devil in Creation, Deus Faber Creation, **Earth-Diver Creation**, **Ex Nihilo Creation**, Imperfect or Accidental Creation, Primordial Waters in Creation, Two Creators Motif.

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SALINAN

The Salinan of California, named for the Salinas River, lived in parts of what are now San Luis Obispo, Monterey, and San Benito counties. They were hunter-gatherers who spoke an ancient and complex language with Hokan roots. It is said that they had contact with the Spanish as early as the first years of the 17th century. Finally Christianized by the Spaniards in the 18th century, the Salinan are now almost extinct and their ancient language is rarely, if ever, spoken.

Various animals—especially, Eagle, Coyote, Raven, and Hummingbird—played important roles in Salinan creation myths of the pre-Christian period. Only fragments of these myths, of which the story below is an example, survive.

***

Because Eagle was so grand and so powerful, Sea Woman was jealous of him, and she came toward him with her great basket that contained the seas. She poured the water onto the land until only the top of Santa Lucia Mountain was left. Eagle gathered the animals there. He borrowed Puma's whiskers to make a lasso, and he lassoed the sea basket. Sea Woman died and Eagle sent Dove to get some new earth. Out of this mud Eagle made a new world. He also made a man and a woman out of elder wood, but the new creatures had to be taken to the sweat house by Prairie-Falcon and breathed on by Eagle to be given life.

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This fragment contains elements of a flood myth and an earth-diver myth. Of particular interest is the basket used to create the flood, since the Salinan were noted for basket-making. Also of interest is the conflict between a presumably earlier creator, Sea Woman, and the new creator, Eagle, perhaps reflecting the fact that the Salinan seemed to prefer land-based hunting and gathering to sea-based fishing. So it is that Sea Woman, a goddess, dies.

See Also: Animals in Creation, Coyote in Creation, **Earth-Diver Creation**, Flood in Creation Myths, Raven in Creation.

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SALISHAN (FLAT HEADS)

The Salishan (Salish) people of Montana, the Pacific Northwest, and Southwestern Canada were composed of many Salishan-speaking tribes, including the Flatheads, the Skagit, the Snohomish, the Thompson, and the Okanagan. What follows are a creation from chaos myth and an explanatory origin myth. They are identical to the myths told by the Salishan neighbors, the Nez Perce.

***

The Sky Chief made the earth out of a lump of clay, and he rolled it out like a piece of dough until it was the size it is now. He covered the earth with soil and made the heavens and the underworld as well. He connected them all with the world tree—the axis mundi. He made animals and a man—a wolf-man. He

then made a woman from the man's tail. These were the Indian ancestors.

***

Some people were arguing over whether the noise made by flying ducks came from their flapping wings or from the wind blowing through their beaks. The chief, unable to resolve the question, called a council. But the council ended in bitter divisions and people left to live in different places. This was the beginning of tribal languages and tribal peoples.

***

The Salishan creation myth suggests a patriarchal culture that makes women—created from the tail of the original wolf-man—of secondary importance to men. The second myth provides an explanation for the many forms of the Salishan language attached to many tribal groups.

See Also: Ancestors in Creation, Animals in Creation, Axis Mundi in Creation, Clay-based Creation, **Creation from Chaos**, Etiological Creation Myths, **Ex Nihilo Creation**, Nez Perce, Okanagan (Isankuafli), Skagit, Snohomish, Thompson Indians.

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SAMOAN

Samoa, in the South Pacific, was settled as early as 1000 B.C.E. by Polynesian peoples. By 200 B.C.E., Samoans were the center of a trading relationship and cultural exchange with the islands of Tonga and Fiji. As widely scattered as their islands are, there are many similarities between the mythologies of the various Polynesian groups.

***

Tagaloa-fa'atutupu-nu'u paced back and forth alone in space before there was any form to the universe. He stood still once, and a rock grew. He told the rock to split, and it did. Many other rocks came along, too, representing various phrases and ideas still used by Samoans. Tagaloa the Creator hit the original rock and it gave birth to Earth and Sea. Then the various rocks spoke to each other. Tagaloa spoke to the main rock many times, bringing forth fresh water, the sky, space, height, and other things and ideas. He also called up maleness and femaleness, Man, Spirit, Heart, Will, and Thought. Tagaloa told the rock that Spirit, Thought, Will, and Heart were to come together in Man, and they did that. Man was to join with Earth to make a couple—Fatu (male) and 'Ele-ele (female). They were to populate a certain part of the world. A certain rock-phrase, "Chief-to-Prop-up-the-Sky," was told to hold up the sky over the earth, but he was not very successful until he made posts. Still, there were only Immensity and Space. Immensity and Space then produced Night and Day, Po and Ao. These made the nine heavens.

Now Tagaloa-the-Creator made Tagaloa-the-Immovable (chief of the sky) and Tagaloa-the-Messenger (his ambassador to the other heavens).

Night and Day lived in a lower heaven and produced Manu'a, Samoa, Sun, and Moon as offspring. The messenger called Night, Day, and their children to a council with the Creator and the Immovable. There they were told that Manu'a and Samoa should go down and become chief over the descendants of Fatu and 'Ele-ele. Sun and Moon were to go down, too, to follow Night and Day. The first places on Earth were the Samoan, Fiji, and Tonga islands. The Creator made people out of worms found on harvested Fue, the "People-making plant."

***

This complex ex nihilo myth has creation by word elements in connection with the Creator's commands to the original rock. It is, like so many creation myths, clearly intended to establish the identity of a particular people; the Samoans and their partners in neighboring islands. The Creator, Tagaloa, is essentially the same as Taaroa, or Tangaroa, the creator in other Polynesian versions of the creation.

***

Some Samoans say that Tagaloa-Langi, the creator, lived in a cosmic egg and that when the egg broke, the pieces of the shell fell into the waters and became the Samoan Islands. Again, the primary purpose of this myth is to establish the importance of Samoa.

An outgrowth of the primary myth is the story of Tagaloa's son, Tuli. This myth has an earth-diver creation aspect.

***

Tuli, the son of the Creator, descended to the primordial waters as a bird but found no place to land. Returning to his father, he requested help. His father dropped a stone down. The stone became the earth. Some say that the Creator had to bring the stone up from beneath the waters. In any case, Tuli took up residence on the stone but found that the sea constantly swelled over it. Again the Creator helped, this time by using a fish hook to raise the rock. Various other rocks sprang up and eventually the rocks gave forth a kind of grass called *fue.* Now Tuli complained that there was no one to live on the rocks. The Creator told his son to pull up some of the fue and to let it rot. Eventually two grubs appeared on it and Tagaloa in his various forms molded the grubs into two male beings. When one of the creatures died, the creator ordered him re-animated and turned into a female. The male and the female mated and human beings came into being.

***

That humans are products of worms or grubs indicates a proper respect for and humility before the awesome powers of nature that surround Samoa. The primal rock in these myths—which contain earth-diver elements—is, in effect, a version of the cosmic egg, making this a creation from chaos as well as an ex nihilo creation myth.

See Also: Animals in Creation, Cosmic Egg in Creation, **Creation from Chaos**, **Earth-Diver Creation**, **Ex Nihilo Creation**, Gilbert Islands, Polynesian, Primordial Waters in Creation, Word-based Creation.

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SAMOYED

The Samoyeds migrated to Siberia in about 450 B.C.E. They are famous for their ancient breed of working dog. Not surprisingly, in their creation myth, like the creation myths of other Siberians, the dog plays a major role.

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We are told that man and the dog were both created naked, and that the devil gave the dog hair by patting him.

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Fuller versions of this myth exist in the Altaic, Buriat, and Chukchee traditions. In most of the Siberian creation myths a trickster-devil figure is actively present. It seems likely that, given the presence of the furless dog, this myth, like the Altaic and several other Central Asian myths with their strong canine presence, was originally an earth-diver myth.

See Also: Altaic, Animals in Creation, Buriat, Chukchee, Devil in Creation, **Earth-Diver Creation**, Siberian-Tartar, Trickster in Creation.

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SAN CRISTOBAL

San Cristobal is one of the many Solomon Islands east of Papua New Guinea. Like other Melanesian peoples in other Melanesian South Pacific Islands, the San Cristobal people have a mythology based on the sense that their island is the center of the world. As each community has its own heroes, in San Cristobal it is Agunua, the creator serpent.

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Agunua was a *figona*, the creator serpent of whom all other figonas were mere incarnations. Agunu had wings and a human head. With his four eyes he could see everywhere, and with his four breasts he suckled the beings he created. He made the earth and the waters ex nihilo, and he made the storms, and he created humans. He gave his brother a yam and told him to plant it, and it produced the fruits the people like—banana, almonds, and coconut. But the brother burnt up some yams once, and this made some fruit poisonous.

***

Here we find the familiar theme of the ex nihilo creation made imperfect by a relative or colleague of the creator. The brother in this case is a mythological relative of the tricksters who supposedly assist the creator in Central Asia and elsewhere.

See Also: Animals in Creation, Banks Islands, **Ex Nihilo Creation**, Fiji Islands, Imperfect or Accidental Creation, Melanesia, New Hebrides, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Trickster in Creation, Two Creators Motif.

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SCIENTIFIC

It has been pointed out by cosmologist Philip Freund and others that the many creation theories of modern science are marked by the myth of a "beginningless beginning," that is, scientists, like earlier mythmakers, postulate a pre-creation universe in which something existed as a basis for the form eventually taken by the cosmos. This indicates that science has not been any more successful than religion at confronting the problem of ultimate origin. Science has, however, given us many hypotheses of creation from undifferentiated equilibrium or the void. These hypotheses, many of which have had their day only to be discredited, are narratives meant to explain a mysterious cosmic phenomenon. As such, they can loosely be called myths.

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According to a late 18th-century theory of French scientist Pierre Simon Laplace, the solar system developed from a huge nebula that rotated at great speed during a long cooling process and literally threw off the planets.

The tidal creation theory was developed by English scientist James Jeans early in the 20th century. It suggests that the gravitational pull of a stray star caused huge tides on the sun's surface and that the crest of a particularly high wave was pulled completely away. It scattered, like wave spray, into space. These bits of spray are the planets—including ours. Earth was at first a fiery chunk of spray that after several billion years of cooling formed a crust.

A collision theory was developed by British scientist Harold Jeffreys from an earlier theory. The theory postulates a collision between the sun and a large out-of-orbit star. The crash caused bits of the sun to break off and eventually form the planets.

American scientists Forest Ray Moulton and Thomas C. Chamberlin developed the eruption theory of creation early in the 20th century. Billions of years ago, they said, a large star passed close enough to the sun to raise two huge eruptions. These sun eruptions sent out material that orbited around the sun and formed the nine planets. Our planet is, of course, one of these, and meteors are smaller bits of the original eruptions. The original straying star went off on a huge orbital path. The presence of the star is analogous to ancient cosmic egg so central to creation from chaos creation myths.

A continuous creation theory gained a great deal of support among British cosmologists in the mid-20th century. According to this theory, hydrogen atoms are created each year in distant space. The atoms are attracted to each other by gravitation until they form a universe of stars and galaxies. When gravitation fails, the atoms break away from each other and disappear into space. More hydrogen atoms are formed, and the whole process begins again. The theory might be called the breathing universe theory.

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Several contemporary scientific theories are considered today to be closer to the truth. It is of interest to note that to greater or lesser degrees they are posited in what could be called mythic terms.

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The Gaia principle is a scientific hypothesis developed by British scientist James Lovelock and American scientist Lynn Margulis. It takes its name from the Greek earth goddess Gaia and suggests that the earth can best be seen as a powerful, self-regulating, living, and, in a biological sense, conscious organism. For Lovelock, Gaia (our earth) is a biological control system in which humans will play a part only as long as they are useful. There will come a time when Gaia will eat her children in what the physicists call heat death. As for Gaia herself, she will continue to exist until the universe collapses.

A new-age, pseudo-scientific cosmic egg myth is based on the thoughts and writings of philosopher Thomas Berry. It is oriented toward the big bang theory and is contained in a book called *The Universe Is a Green Dragon,* by physicist Brian Swimme. The book is essentially a Socratic dialogue between Swimme as student and Berry as teacher. It explores the idea of "cosmic allurement," the cosmic "love" that binds all nature together: "the universe . . . is alive, an embryogenesis beginning with the cosmic egg of the primeval fireball and culminating in the present emergent reality."

***

Myths are considered truth by the cultures from which they first emerge—at least until they are exposed as myth. The big bang theory, the currently accepted creation story of our scientific culture, reflects our cultural priorities; it is a record of our culture's understanding of its own place in the universe and its sense of what the universe is. It depicts a world created in a few minutes in one great explosion long, long ago. According to the theory, our solar system was organized by that explosion and has been expanding ever since. At this moment, we can see the moment of creation because the light from the first explosion reaches us now after a voyage taking 20 billion years. The big bang theory suggests that everything that exists has a common ancestry in a single primeval event, the ultimate expression of an ex nihilo creation.

See Also: Cosmic Egg in Creation, **Creation from Chaos**, **Ex Nihilo Creation**, Goddess as Creator, Sun in Creation.

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SENECA (ONÖDOWÅGA')

The Seneca tribe is the largest of the six nation Iroquois League, in which they are united with the Oneida, Mohawk, Cayuga, Onondaga, and Tuscarora peoples. Living in Western New York State, the Seneca today number some 10,000.

Theirs is a matrilineal society in which women play a large social and political role. The Seneca earth-diver creation story features the Sky Woman figure that is also prominent in the other Iroquoian creations as well as those of the Huron and Cherokee tribes.

***

There was a time when water was everywhere and was populated by ducks, loons, other water birds, Turtle, and Toad. In those days, the people lived in the sky with the Great Chief. One day the chief's daughter fell sick and began to die. A wise man learned in a dream that she should be placed next to a tree and that the tree should then be dug up. He told the chief about his dream, and the chief followed the dream's instructions. Then a man came along who resented the digging up of the tree and kicked the girl into the hole. Suddenly she was floating down through space. Seeing what was happening, the birds rose and formed a soft net with their wings and caught the girl. When they got tired, they put her on Turtle's back, but he got tired too. The birds realized the girl would need something to rest on, so Toad dove down to the bottom of the waters and brought back a bit of soil. She placed it on Turtle's back, where it began to grow. Turtle's back grew, too. Soon there was the earth for the girl to live on. She was happy there; she made a little house, and soon she produced a baby girl.

The woman and the girl worked the land. Soon the daughter had twin boys, Flint (Othagwenda) and Sapling (Juskaha). Sky Woman did not like Othagwenda, so she put him in a tree. She taught Juskaha how to make things and hunt. Soon she noticed that he would come home without his bow and arrows. It seems he was giving them to the twin in the tree. Finally he brought his twin home with him. They stayed there together for a long time. Then they decided to enlarge the earth. Othagwenda made Mosquito and rough land. Mosquito was huge and could even chop down trees. Juskaha was horrified. "This is a terrible animal; he might kill the people we plan to create," he said, and he rubbed the animal down to his present size. As for Othagwenda, he did not like his brother's creations—big fat animals, rich syrup-dripping maples. "These animals must be made harder to catch," he said. He made the animals thinner and faster, and then made the maples drip sap that had to be boiled into syrup.

Finally, the two brothers fought. Juskaha killed Othagwenda, but it was too late for the good brother to change the bad brother's work.

***

The familiar twin motif is used, as it often is, to express the sense of duality in the world. Good prevails, but as in the Genesis myth, once evil enters the world it stays there. The predominance of the Sky Woman and her daughter reflects the matrilineal arrangement of the Seneca tribe.

See Also: Animals in Creation, Cherokee (Tsalagi), Duality in Creation, **Earth-Diver Creation**, Huron, Mohawk (Kanienkaha), Oneida, Onondaga, Primordial Waters in

Creation, Sky Woman Descends, Twins in Creation, Two Creators Motif.

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SHILLUK

The Shilluk are a Nilotic tribe of the Southern Sudan—that is, they are people whose life and subsistence centers around the Nile River. Although they tell of a creator god, Jo-Uk or Juok, they adhere to a type of monotheism that supposes a Brahman-like animistic essence called Macaradit that is in all things. Their king is considered to be divine. The two related tales below center on the tangible figure of J0-Uk.

***

When the world was new the great creator Jo-Uk made the sacred white cow, which gave birth to a son she named Kola, who in his turn produced a son named Ukwa. Ukwa's two dark virgin wives came out of the Nile, the holy river—the river from which the sacred white cow originally emerged. Nyakang, one son of Ukwa, was a tall, blue-black warrior. He traveled south and founded the Shilluk nation, which stood on the marshes of the Upper Nile. Nyakang became the first ruler and demigod of the Shilluk.

***

Another myth says that Jo-Uk was exploring his world and decided to stop in what would be the white world to mould white people out of white sand. When he came to Egypt he made reddish brown people out of the Nile mud. Finally he came to the Southern Sudan where he created the Shilluk people out of the rich black earth . . . He gave all of these humans arms, legs, ears, eyes, and other body parts so that they could survive and prosper.

***

The first myth, an example of the creation from chaos and world parent motifs, explains the divine kingship so important to the Shilluk. The second myth, also a creation from chaos story—the chaos being unformed sand—is a more typical creation of humans myth, and like other colonial period African myths, it treats the question of the creation and separation of races.

See Also: Animals in Creation, Clay-based Creation, **Creation from Chaos**, **World Parent Creation.**

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Shinto. *See* Japanese (Shinto)

Shoshonean. *See* Luiseño; Ute

SIBERIAN

A well-known and widespread Central Asian earth-diver creation myth has clear connections to the many earth-diver myths of the Native Americans and to the Mongolian-related tribes of Siberia.

***

The creator, Otsirvani, and his helper, Chagan-Shukuty, came down from above and noticed a frog diving into the water. Chagan-Shukuty reached

down for it and turned it onto its back so Otsirvani could sit on its stomach. Otsirvani ordered his assistant to dive to the bottom of the waters and bring back whatever he found there. After several attempts, Chagan-Shukuty brought back some earth, and Otsirvani ordered him to sprinkle it on the frog's stomach. Now the frog sank a bit under the weight, leaving only the earth visible, and the two gods rested on the new earth. While they were sleeping, the devil came by and decided to destroy the gods and their new earth. He picked up the sleeping creators and ran with them towards what he thought would be the waters, but the farther he ran, the more the earth grew. Finally, he dropped the sacred beings, who woke up. Otsirvani explained to his companion what had happened and praised the new earth for saving them.

***

In this case, the creator's helper is Chagan-Shukuty, a name for the Buddha. His presence reflects the influence of Buddhism on the original indigenous religion and mythology.

See Also: Altaic, Animals in Creation, Buriat, Central Asian, Devil in Creation, **Earth-Diver Creation**, Huron, Mongolian, Samoyed, Trickster in Creation.

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SIBERIAN-TARTAR

The myth that follows is really a version of myths more specifically attributable to particular Siberians such as the Altaic, Samoyed, and Buriat peoples.

***

In this version the great high god calls Pajana, the creator god, to Heaven to give him the magic of life. While he is gone, Pajana leaves the furless dog to watch over the lifeless objects he has created, but the evil Erlik spits on them and they have to be turned inside out before life can be given to them.

***

As in so many Central Asian myths, the point here is that evil exists in human life because of the undermining of creation by a devil.

See Also: Altaic, Animals in Creation, Buriat, Chukchee, Devil in Creation, Samoyed, Trickster in Creation.

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SIKH

Sikhism originated in India. Sikhs are followers of Guru Nanak (1469–1539) and the word "sikh" itself means "disciple" or "learner."

***

Guru Nanak taught that there was one God, Sat Guru, the creator of everything that is and the primary teacher. Gender is not applied to this god, who is closer in concept to the Hindu Brahman, the neuter essence that is everywhere and nowhere, than to the more anthropomorphic Abrahamic God. As for creation,

it is a gradually evolving process originated by God. From air came water and from water came the world and plants, animals, and humans.

***

The Sikh view of creation fits well with modern evolutionary thought.

See Also: **Ex Nihilo Creation**, Indian.

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SIOUX

One of the largest and most influential of the Native American peoples, the Sioux, are Plains people located mainly in South Dakota, but also in Nebraska, Minnesota, and parts of Southern Canada. They are made up of three major groups, each with its own sub-divisions. These are the Santee, or Dakota people; the Yankton-Yanktonai or Nakota, including a sub-division; the Nakoda, including the Assiniboine; and the Titowan/Teton, or Lakota people, who include, among others, the Oglala, the Brule, and the Hunkpapa, the last being the tribe of the famous Chief Sitting Bull.

The Brule Sioux of South Dakota tell a story that begins with a flood, suggesting a forgotten creation of earlier times.

***

The first people were attacked by the great Water Monster, who sent a flood to kill them. The people tried to escape by climbing the steep hill in the middle of the Brule land, but the water found them and drowned them. All that was left was a pool of blood, which became the sacred red pipestone quarry. The pipe later made from that rock—the blood and bones of the first ancestors—is sacred, too. When it is used it has great power; the breath of the old people is in the smoke that comes from it.

After the flood the Water Monster was turned to stone like the people. She became the terrifying place called the Badlands.

There was one person who managed to escape the flood. She was a fine young girl; she was rescued by Wanblee, an eagle, and taken to the highest spot in the Black Hills, the tall tree that was the eagle's home. There the girl became Wanblee's wife and gave birth to twins, a boy and a girl, who later became the parents of the Sioux nation. The eagle was, of course, the messenger of the Great Mystery, and the Sioux are proud to be called eagle people.

***

A Lakota story, with emergence creation characteristics—says that in the beginning First Man emerged like a plant from the Great Plains earth. At first only his head was visible, and he looked around at the nothingness that surrounded him. There were not yet any rivers, mountains, grass, or animals. Gradually First Man pulled himself up out of the soil until he stood on the soft earth. It was the sun that gave solidity to the earth and strength to the man. Out of this man came the Lakota people.

***

These are myths that speak to the animistic sacredness of the land and even of the smoke that emerges from the sacred pipe. The slain monster out of which the

badlands were made is a mythological relative of the Babylonian Tiamat and the Norse Ymir. We also find here an example of the sacred twins motif so important to many Western hemisphere myths.

See Also: Ancestors in Creation, Animals in Creation, Assiniboine, Babylonian, **Emergence Creation**, Flood in Creation Myths, Norse, Sexual Impulse in Creation, Sun in Creation, Twins in Creation, **World Parent Creation**.

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SKAGIT

The Skagit, or Upper Skagit Indian people are descended from five Skagit groups that lived along the Sauk and Upper Skagit Rivers in the foothills of the Cascade Mountains in the state of Washington. This is their creation from chaos story.

***

In the beginning when the world was completely flooded, Suelick made four powerful brothers named Schodelick, Swadick, Hode, and Stoodke. Suelick told his brothers to create earth and people, so they left Suelick and their home. Schodelick, the eldest, who stands for something round or perhaps even a canoe anchor, came to Skagit country and made man, woman, and some land. He also created fish for the rivers and lakes and showed the man and woman how to fish. He taught them how to clean and eat the fish also. Then Schodelick created all things that live: the trees, plants, and all the other animals. Schodelick also taught man and woman how to use these. After finishing creation Schodelick went to the waterfall near Marble Mount and told his brothers about his work. He told them he would be in the water near the big rock under the falls, and he dove into the water and sang and swam for a long time. He still lives there and represents the greatest power for the Skagit. You can even walk by this place where he lives, and if you are there early enough in the morning, you might hear his song.

When Schodelick first dove into the water after creation he was hungry. Thus the Skagit people, who live by the power search or vision quest, also dive into the water hungry after many days of fasting in order to hear Schodelick. Without the power received from this search, the Indian has no purpose and does not live long. All the young Skagit people search for this power.

Schodelick's three brothers went to Okanagan, where they created the earth and people there, as well as the trees, plants, and animals. They taught these people the use of all the things in creation. Hode, one of the brothers, represents fire to some, and the people he helped create worship fire. They become wild and can return to this world only by beating their heads in the fire.

This is the true story of the beginning of these people.

***

The Skagit myth appears to have as its primary purpose the establishment of the

source of an important water diving ritual. Also of interest is the stated connection between the spiritual center of the Skagit people and that of their neighbors, the Okanagan.

See Also: **Creation from Chaos**, Okanagan (Isankuafli), Primordial Waters in Creation.

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SNOHOMISH

The Snohomish were the primary native tribe of the area in the State of Washington on Puget Sound now known as Snohomish County. They were hunter/gatherers and fishers of salmon. Their ex nihilo creation myth with world parent elements contains the familiar motif of the separation of Sky and Earth.

***

The Creator did his work from the east to the west, giving a different language to each group of people he made. When he got to Puget Sound he liked it so much he decided to stop there. This is why there are so many different languages in Puget Sound and nearby.

The people complained about the low sky on which they constantly bumped their heads. The elders of the tribes met in council and decided to push the sky up. At an appointed time, someone would shout, "Ya-hoh," meaning lift together in all of the Puget Sound languages, and the people would all press upwards with huge fur trees. It was difficult, but the people did use this method to push up the sky to where it is now.

There were three hunters, however, who knew nothing about the sky raising. They were chasing four elks over where the earth meets the sky, and they followed the elks into the sky when they leaped there. When the sky went up, so did the elks and hunters. They are still there now. The hunters are the handle of the Big Dipper, while the four elks are the bowl. A little star nearby is the dog of one of the hunters.

Others were caught in the sky that day—a little fish and six men in two canoes—and they are stars now too.

The Puget Sound people still say "Ya-hoh" when they want to lift something together.

***

The people of this area are particularly concerned with the question of multiple languages among close neighbors and even related peoples. The Snohomish myth, like the Salishan, for example, is etiological in this sense, as well as in the sense that the myth is directed primarily at the explanation of such things as the stars.

See Also: Animals in Creation, Etiological Creation Myths, **Ex Nihilo Creation**, Salishan (Flat Heads), Separation of Heaven and Earth in Creation, **World Parent Creation**.

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Society Islands. *See* Tahitian

SOLOMON ISLANDS

Melanesians of the Solomon Islands, like their relatives elsewhere in Melanesia, tend to be less interested in cosmic

creation myths than in how aspects of their particular island life came about. Each community tends to have its own deities, such as the winged serpent *figona* creator, Agunua, in San Cristobal.

Several familiar mythological creation myth themes are prevalent in the Solomon Islands. These include the sense of a mythical time when humans and animals related intimately. There are stories of the first children being suckled by animals and of women marrying animals. Typically, the world already existed in some sense before the world of the particular community was shaped. Sometimes the first beings came from underground, sometimes from the sky. Usually their first job was to raise the sky off the earth to make room for life. They also controlled the sea—obviously an important fact for people on isolated islands at the mercy of the sea. In many myths humans are made from wood or clay by the primal beings, and sometimes a sacred child is born to a woman abandoned by the primal beings. This child sometimes becomes the killer of a monster that threatens his people.

The highly individualized mythologies of each community in the Solomons and, for that matter, in Melanesia as a whole, is the result of people living on highly isolated islands that demand their own explanation of origin.

See Also: Animals in Creation, Banks Islands, Clay-based Creation, **Creation from Chaos**, Fiji Islands, Melanesia, New Hebrides, Papua New Guinea, San Cristobal, Separation of Earth and Heaven in Creation.

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SUMERIAN

The Sumerians developed the first of the great Mesopotamian civilizations in the third millennium B.C.E. The Sumerologist Samuel Noah Kramer in his now-famous *History Begins at Sumer* argues that the Sumerians were the first to establish traditions and activities that have come to be basic elements of what we call civilization. These include, to name a few, writing, cities, libraries, codes of law, history, and schools. Others may argue that history began elsewhere—in Egypt or India, for example—but the Sumerians were without question pioneers of civilization. A non-Semitic people who were eventually overpowered by invading Semites, the Sumerians, long after they were gone, profoundly influenced world culture.

Only fragments exist of the tablets on which the Sumerian myths were written in cuneiform script. We know enough, however, to be able to relate the following elements of a creation from chaos myth.

***

The goddess Nammu (Primeval Sea) gave birth to Heaven and Earth as a unified cosmic mountain of sorts. Heaven (An) was male, and Earth (Ki) was female (thus, Anki = universe or heaven-earth). They produced the air god, Enlil, who separated them so creation could move forward. Enlil carried his mother Ki downward, and An carried himself upwards. Enlil lived in darkness, so he created the moon god, Nanna, who gave



Gilgamesh statue from the Palace of Sargon, 721–705 B.C.E. (The Art Archive / Musée du Louvre Paris / Alfredo Dagli Orti)

birth to the sun god, Utu. Then Enlil joined together with his mother, and it was this union of earth and air that made creation possible, beginning with the water god of vegetation and wisdom, En-ki or Enki (Ea in his later Semitic form), lord of the universe.

Some tablets seem to suggest that it was Enki who gathered the primeval waters into the Tigris and Euphrates rivers and who organized town life and the domestication of animals—indicated by phrases like "cities and hamlets" and "stalls and sheepfolds." Enki also stocked the swamps with fish, arranged the marshlands, and knew the ways of agriculture.

One of the Sumerian tablets says that Nammu and the other gods wanted to create humans to serve them. At a somewhat drunken banquet, the gods tried to create these humans. Mother Earth made some that could not reproduce, and Enki tried to form better ones out of clay. His humans could survive, but they were not particularly strong in body or spirit. So it is that human beings, the creations of drunken gods, have so many problems and weaknesses.

There came a time when the gods tired of humanity's failings and sent the Great Flood to destroy the world. Only Ziusudra (later Utnapishtim in the Semitic language of Babylon) survived with his wife in an ark of sorts. The influence on the Hebrew story of Noah's Ark is obvious. The story of the Flood is preserved in the Babylonian Epic of Gilgamesh, a work based on an earlier Sumerian story of which we only have fragments, a segment of which is retold here. This is the flood hero Ziasudra/Utnapishtim speaking:

The god told me to build a sturdy boat.
Forget what you own and love and
save your life.
Into the boat bring samples of all living things.
Confused and upset I did what I was
told.
But how can I explain this to the
people, I asked?
Tell them that Enlil the God of War
Has no love for the people and will
destroy the city.
For this Ea will cause the rains to
come.
The gods no pity for humans.
I spoke to the people and a few
helped me.

We built a huge cube-like ship—
seven levels
With nine rooms each.
We loaded the vessel with food and
wine
And the seeds of all living things.
Then my family and any others who
wanted to
Joined me on the ship. . . .
As ordered by Ea I closed the hatches.

[The flood then engulfed the earth and everything on it. People and their possessions were obliterated. But on the seventh day the rains subsided and Utnapishtim sent out birds to discover if there was any dry land.]

The birds—the dove, the swallow and
the raven—
Found dry land and the people left
the ship. . .
As for me, I waited for the god to
come to me.
And Enlil did come to me—the one
chosen by Ea.
And the god blessed me and said my
wife and I
Would be like the gods now, living at
the source of the great rivers.

***

The Sumerian creation myth—a creation from chaos story with strong world parent aspects and the separation of Earth and Sky into the world we know—is one centered firmly in a land of waters diverted for fertility. It is a myth of fertility and craftsmanship. Thus the male god Enki diverts the chaotic female primordial waters into the great rivers of Sumer/Iraq to bring order to the land. Of interest here is the somewhat callous treatment of humans by the gods. The humans who created the myths seem to have fully realized their slave-like relation to nature in the process of keeping alive. The flood myth, too, reflects the arbitrariness of the gods in the Mesopotamian world view.

See Also: Assyrian, Babylonian, Clay-based Creation, **Creation from Chaos**, Creation from Division of Primordial Unity, Fall from Grace in Creation, Flood in Creation Myths, Goddess as Creator, Hebrew, Imperfect or Accidental Creation, Primordial Waters in Creation, Raven in Creation, Separation of Heaven and Earth in Creation, Sexual Impulse in Creation, **World Parent Creation**.

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SUMU

The Sumu, or Mayangna, of the so-called Mosquito coast of eastern Nicaragua and Honduras say that two brothers, the older of whom was Papan (Papa, Father), the sun, and the younger of whom was the Moon, created the world ex nihilo.

***

After they made the beautiful world that we call nature, the creator brothers

struck out in a canoe to admire their work and decide what they should do next. The rapids caught them, however; and they were thrown into the water. After swimming to shore, they made a fire to get warm and found some maize nearby to roast. When they threw the cobs onto the ground, animals sprang up and scampered away. Papan threw some of the cobs into the water and they became fish. Some he threw into the air and they became birds. Eventually there were animals everywhere and the brothers were well pleased.

Papan was so happy and entranced by a bird that, as he watched it, he stepped back into the fire and was consumed by the flames. He rose up into the air and became the sun. As the younger brother watched he also fell into the fire, but he struggled to stay on the earth; the sparks he made became the stars. Eventually he was consumed, however; and he became the moon.

***

What stands out in this myth is the accidental nature of the creation of specific elements after the original ex nihilo creation. The creators are humble beings who take great joy from their work and who contain within themselves creative powers that are perhaps beyond their understanding. The myth suggests a certain humility combined with a sense of inner power in the creators of the myth; the Sumu people themselves.

See Also: Animals in Creation, **Ex Nihilo Creation**, Sun in Creation.

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SWAHILI

The Swahili are a Bantu people of the coastal regions of Kenya and Tanzania in east Africa. The ex nihilo myth below is creation story deeply influenced by the Islamic religion, which, over the last centuries, has gained strength in the area.

***

There always was God; God is beyond birth and death. He creates by merely speaking. So he said, "Let there be light," and, of course, there was light. God was so pleased with this light that he made some of it enter his prophet, Mohammed. After God had made Mohammed's soul, he was so pleased with it that he decided to create humans so Mohammed could go to them as a prophet and teacher.

God knew everything that would ever happen, so he began creating things to fulfill the mysterious purpose that hid behind his knowledge. He made the Throne of Heaven—his throne, the Throne of the Last Judgment—and sat it upon the magnificent carpet he made; a carpet of every imaginable color that is huge beyond conception. Good souls live forever in joy in the shadow of the carpet under the Throne of Heaven.

Then God created the Mother of Books, a book with a soul of her own and one that is full of God's wisdom and the great secrets of life. God created the Pen with which to write down his commandments. The Pen is huge beyond comprehension and has a conscious being. It has been writing down the history of mankind since it was given life by God.

Then God created the Trumpet and the archangel Serafili (Asrafel) to blow it at Doomsday. God also made the Garden of

Delights, a land of milk and honey, a paradise for good souls. He created the fire for the eternal punishment of souls who would not heed his messenger, Mohammed. He created the angels, the most important of whom was Jiburili (Gabriel), so full of God's radiance that even Mohammed fainted when he saw him in his original form. There were also the archangels Zeraili (Azrafel, the angel of death), Maliki (Michael, the angel of fire), and many others. God created the Cock of Heaven; his crow can be heard in the crowing of all the barnyard cocks that wake us each morning for the first prayers.

This is how God created the world: He rolled out the sky and placed the sun, moon, stars, and planets in it and set things to run according to the patterns we know. He made the universe of seven heavens, each with its own planet. These heavens are watched over by the souls of eight prophets: Adam, Isa (Jesus), Yahya (John the Baptist), Yusufu (Joseph), Idrisi (Enoch), Haruni (Aron), Musa (Moses), and in the highest heaven the ancient prophet Abraham, whose soul stands by the celestial mosque and its 70,000 praying angels.

Each heaven has its opposite hell; the farthest one away from the creator is for the unbelievers. God spread out the carpet of earth, with its infinite variety of forms and shapes—seas, islands, mountains, valleys, trees, plants, deserts, insects, birds, fish, and animals. All the creatures have their own ways of praising God. God taught the creatures the laws of nature—how the big animals eat the small, and so forth.

God created time, too. Finally he called together the angels, and after the morning prayers, he spoke to them of his intention to create a being with their intelligence but made of clay. The angels had their doubts, and God let them speak. They saw the specter of sin and war over the earth, but God reassured them; everything would work out according to his mysterious plan. The angels therefore agreed and sang God's praise.

Now God took clay and made Adam, whose name means earth. He gave Adam life by speaking, "Life." Adam shuddered and came alive, and his first words were in praise of God.

***

Muslims accept much of "the Book", the Bible, including much of the Genesis account of creation. Muslims consider themselves, like Jews and Christians, "people of the Book." Over the centuries, however, there have been many retellings of creation with an emphasis on Islamic elements. The Islamic creation can be found in the *Qur'an* and other Islamic writings and, as in the case of the Swahili myth here, in the folk tradition.

See Also: Clay-based Creation, **Ex Nihilo Creation**, Hebrew, Islamic, Word-based Creation.

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TAHITIAN

One of the Society Islands (Îles de la Société) of French Polynesia, islands made famous by the paintings of Paul Gauguin, Tahiti is a center of Polynesian culture. The Island's creation stories contain the familiar Polynesian forms: Taaroa or

Tangaroa and the cosmic egg. There is a sense here also of ex nihilo creation, since the creator "simply existed" in space from the beginning of time.

***

Taaroa, the great god, simply existed in space at the beginning of time before there was earth, sky, or humankind. In fact, he became the universe—the sands, rocks, and light. Taaroa is the germ of life. He is within, under, above. The universe is his shell.

It is said that Taaroa lived in his egg-like shell for a long time, but that finally he broke out of it and held it up to make the dome-sky, Rumia. Out of himself he made the world. He used his spine to make a mountain range, his ribs became hillsides, his fingernails became shells and scales, and his feathers became trees and plants. He kept his head to himself, however.

Taaroa made the gods and other things. Just as Taaroa had a shell, so does everything we know. The sky is a shell, earth is a shell for everything that lives in it, and the woman is the shell for human beings, because we are all born of woman. Taaroa is uniqueness itself. He is the rock in earth's center, out of which the world grew; he is the earth's surface.

He conjured the first man out of the earth, out of himself. This man was Ti'i. He created the first woman, too. Her name was Hina; she could see backwards and forwards and she was good. Ti'i was not good; he felt malice toward human beings.

Eventually there were wars in Heaven among the gods and on Earth among humans. This made Taaroa and his assistant, Tu (whom some say is the same as Ti'i), very angry. They cursed creation. Only the mitigation of the good Hina prevented the destruction of the world. Now, when storms come, Hina makes them finally go away, and when leaves fall, Hina makes new ones grow. Although Ti'i



Creation of the Universe, *by Paul Gauguin. (© Geoffrey Clements/CORBIS)*

conjured up death for humans, Hina said she would bring them back to life. This is why the people say that men, not women, brought death.

***

The elements that stand out in the Tahitian myth are the animistic and Brahman-like concept of the supreme deity as the essence in all things, and the idea that women are more trustworthy than men. There is also the de facto cosmic egg aspect in the creator's being a rock out of which the universe sprang.

See Also: Animistic Creation, Brahman, Cosmic Egg in Creation, **Creation from Chaos**, Death Origin in Creation, **Ex Nihilo Creation**, Polynesian, Samoan.

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TALMUDIC

The *Talmud* or *Shas* is a series of rabbinic commentaries on Jewish law, history, and ethics comprised of several segments from approximately 200 to 500 C.E. The so-called *Babylonian Talmud* is composed of the early *Mishnah* and part of the later *Gemorah.* The *Palestinian* or *Jerusalem Talmud* is an addition to the *Gemorah*. What follows is a creation story from the Babylonian *Talmud*.

***

At the beginning of creation the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet appeared before the Creator, each hoping to be chosen as the beginning of his first word. God chose *Beth,* spoke the word *baruch* ("blessed"), and so began his work with a blessing.

On day one God made the heavens and day and night. When he threw a huge stone into the emptiness that surrounded Him it became the earth. On day two God created the angels, on day three the plants and the Cedars of Lebanon as well as the material on earth with which to make axes to cut down the Cedars if they became too tall and proud. On that day he also created Eden Paradise for his future first humans and for the righteous after death. On the fourth day God created the heavenly bodies. The fifth day was for sea and air creatures, including Leviathan and Zinn, and on the sixth day he created the beasts. When, that day, God discussed the creation of humans with the angels, some of them were not pleased, seeing the new humans as rivals. In anger, God caused these angels to be consumed by fire. He then sent the angel Gabriel to collect soil from the four corners of the world. God planned to use this soil to create his humans. The earth resisted Gabriel's attempts to collect the soil because the earth knew that the future humans would despoil it. But God reached down and took the soil with which to make Adam (adamah), the first man, and he planned to give the new body a soul. But the angel Samael (Satan) and his followers complained about a being other than themselves—a being made of lowly dirt—being allowed to have a soul. Once again God became angry, and he threw Satan and his companions into Hell.

Then God created Adam and breathed life into him. Some say he appeared to be about 20 years old. Adam noticed that all of the animals had mates, but he was

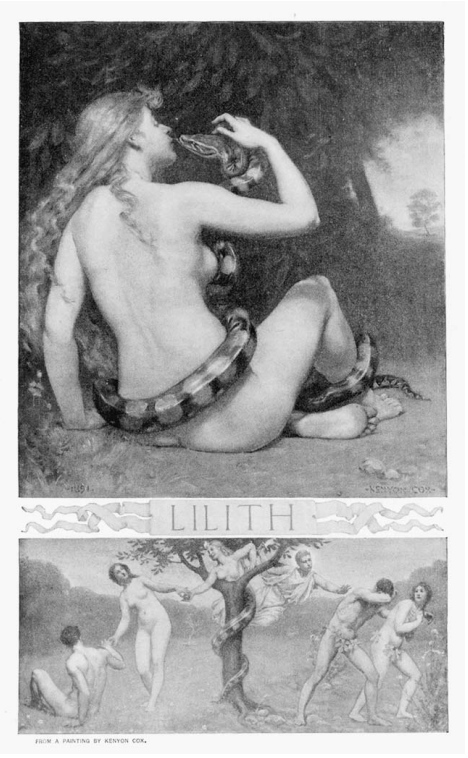
alone. So, to satisfy him God created Lilith out of soil, too. But Lilith insisted upon making love on top of Adam rather than allowing him to be on top of her as he wished, and when Adam complained she scorned his desire to place himself above her in any way since they were both equally made of dust. After speaking the name of God she disappeared to live among demons.

Now God, sympathizing with Adam, made Eve for him. Adam ruled over the male beasts in the east and north while Eve ruled the females of the south and west. Adam and Eve were happy, living without clothes but for shoulder bands bearing the name of God. But Satan and Lilith had other plans for them.

***

In the Talmudic Creation myth we find an extension of the original Genesis account, with more emphasis on the fallen angels that would become important in Christian mythology as well. The presence of the figure of Lilith reflects a Mesopotamian tradition absorbed, presumably, by the Hebrews in exile in Babylon. Lilith (<Sumerian Ninlil or Lilitu of c. 3000 B.C.E. origin) was associated with air by the Sumerians and later with disease and evil-bearing wind. In short, she was a storm demon, and clearly the wrong kind of wife for Adam in Paradise. Some of her rebellious characteristics, however, will take form in the rebellion of Eve described in Genesis.

The words that appear before the creator suggest a creation from chaos theme, the letters being the unformed potential for the as yet unformed universe. As elements of creation itself they imply the sacredness of "the Word," a sacredness we find also in the creation stories of the Indian Vedic tradition.



Night monster and vampire of Babylonian origin supposed to haunt wildernesses. In Rabbinical writings she is supposed to have been Adam's first wife. (© Mary Evans Picture Library / Alamy)

See Also: Clay-based creation, **Creation from Chaos**, **Ex Nihilo Creation**, Hebrew, Imperfect or Accidental Creation, Sexual Impulse in Creation, Word-based Creation.

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TANTRIC

Tantrism is rooted in pre-Aryan India and has developed as an esoteric out-

growth of both Hinduism and Buddhism (Vajrayana). It emphasizes the feminine aspect of a bipolar Absolute. In Tantric doctrine, an energy source or emanation is the creative germ. The slightest movement of this Absolute is felt throughout creation. Tantric ideas are contained in ancient writings called *Tantras*. In Sanskrit *tantra* means "essence." The root of the word is *tantori*, meaning "to weave." The original tantras were composed as conversations between the great god Shiva and his mate (*Shakti*). What follows is a tantric creation story.

***

Before anything existed there was only a tiny bit of creative power. That power was female in nature and was the germ for the creation of the universe by the Goddess Time.

The goddess created all things and became at once tired and filled with pleasure. She created the land, the seas, the plants, the animals, and she then worked on balancing the various aspects of creation so that they could multiply. Then the goddess created the female form for herself and named herself Kali. Out of herself she created a male form, Mahakala, and she taught him the pleasures of procreation. From the union of this male and female came the first humans, to whom Kali and Mahakala taught the Tantric rituals of creative regeneration.

***

In the Indian form of Tantra, sex is the doorway to enlightenment and ecstasy; the means of unifying the polar opposites. Humanity itself was created when the male and the female merged sexually and spiritually. The purpose of life in the Tantric tradition, reflected in the myth, is the perfect union of male and female leading to wholeness and enlightenment.



The famous Lord Shiva statue with a length of about 108 feet at Haridwar, a holy city in India. (Dreamstime)

See Also: **Ex Nihilo Creation**, Goddess as Creator, Indian, Sexual Impulse in Creation.

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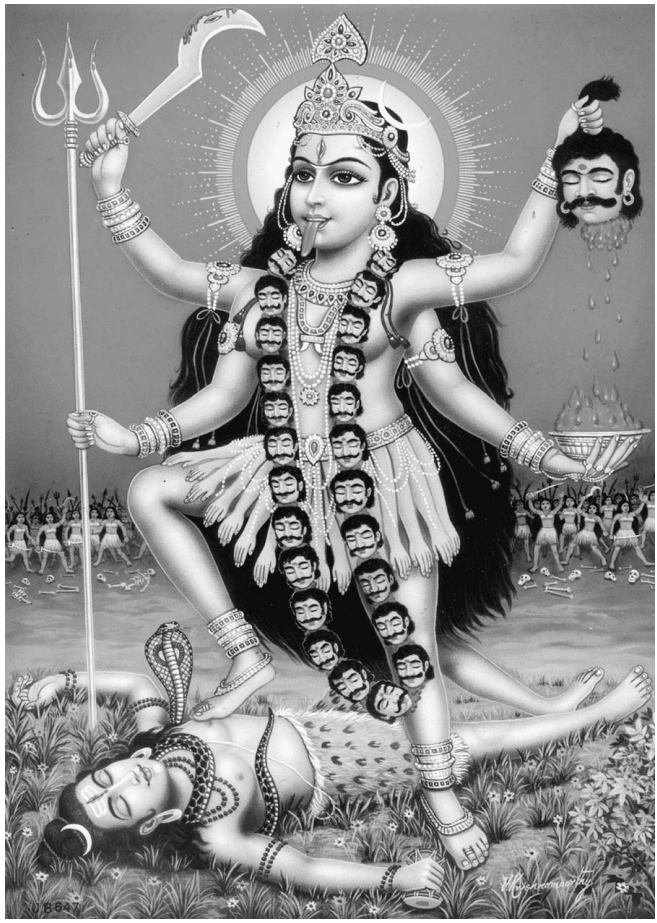
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Teotihuacán. *See* Toltec

TEWA

The Tewa language and Tewa traditions are peculiar to certain of the Rio Grande pueblo people in the Southwestern United States. These Native American communities are the pueblos of San Juan, Santa



The Goddess Kali has a long and complex tradition in Hinduism, she can be presented as dark and violent, or as a benevolent mother goddess. (© Phillipe Lissac/Godong/Corbis)

Clara, San Ildefonso, and Nambe. The Tewa creation story, like those of most other Southwestern peoples, including the neighboring Keres people and the Navajos, is an emergence myth.

***

The people say that Long Sash, the evening star, once led the ancestors from the north to the place of the pueblos. They say that Long Sash was a great warrior and that he agreed to lead the people away from their marauding enemies. He warned them, however, that the journey would be hard. On the way, he acted as a culture hero, teaching them how to hunt and behave, and eventually they found a new country.

Whereas it had been dark where they lived before, in the new country it was light all the time. The people walked around in this country, and they quarreled and fought until Long Sash made them stop. He ordered them to rest a while before deciding whether to continue following him or to go another way. After they were rested, the people did as they still do today when they have to decide something—they gazed at the two bright stars that lie north of Long Sash. After

doing that they decided to follow Long Sash. He made sure they followed with good feeling toward each other.

After a while, everyone—including Long Sash—grew tired. Long Sash heard voices, and he fell into a long trancelike sleep to listen to them. When he awoke, he told the people he had been given signs. He said they would soon reach their proper destination and that, if they ever doubted, they should pray to the spirits above and look at his headdress for inspiration. He placed his headdress in the sky.

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Another version of the Tewa emergence creation myth follows.

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There are other ways of telling how the people got to the Middle World, where they live now. Many say, for instance, that it was Spider Woman, or Spider Grandmother, who was most helpful. They say that in the beginning there was only darkness and the people lived under the ground. The people became restless in the dark and began looking for another kind of life. When Mole visited them from above, the people asked what it was like up there. Mole, of course, could not see, but he said it did feel different up there. He offered to lead the people up and said he would tell them when they were in a different world. As they followed Mole, they had to pile the dirt Mole dug up behind them; therefore, they could never find the way back to the old world.

Finally they came out into a new world full of blinding light. The people were terrified and could not see. They covered their eyes and wanted to go back to the darkness, but then a little voice told them to wait and take their hands slowly away from their eyes. They did this, and there in front of them was Spider Woman, the old, stooped grandmother of everything that is.

Spider Woman was flanked by her twin grandsons, the War Twins. "Don't be foolish the way these boys are," she advised the people. "They are war-makers; don't waste your time fighting each other," she said. "To be happy, you must never use weapons."

Spider Woman pointed out the green growing thing, corn, to the people and told them how to work the land so they could grow it.

Then she pointed out the sacred mountains, and said the proper home for the people was near great Turtle Mountain (Sandia Mountain) in the south. She said that when the people found her and their friend Mole again, they would have arrived at the right place. Then she faded into night. The people were terrified of the long night, and they ignored Spider Woman's advice and in the morning traveled to a mountain they could see clearly—to Red Mountain rather than to Turtle Mountain. There the Comanche killed many of the people; the mountain is called Los Sangres (meaning blood) for that reason. Then the people again disobeyed Spider Woman by quarreling, making weapons, and killing one another. It went on like this for a long time, and the War Twins in the sky laughed at them.

They went back to the place of emergence but did not find Spider Woman there; they saw her in the sky in her beautiful web, shaking her head at their foolishness and weeping little star tears. Some of the people went up into the sky to the Grandmother.

Finally there were only two people left, a man and a woman. They took the hard road south, through the desert country. Then they saw some green trees and went over to them. There they found the beautiful Rio Grande.

A little turtle appeared in the sand. It was the turtle of Turtle Mountain; it had Spider Woman's sign on its back, and it left tracks like Mole tracks. The man and the woman knew that they had found the place to settle because they had found Mole and Spider Woman again. That is why the Tewa people live where they live now.

***

The languages of the Tewa and Keres people of the two main Pueblo groups are somewhat related and, not surprisingly, so are the religions of the two. Spider Woman or her equivalent (e.g., Thinking Woman) plays a major role in all of the pueblos, perhaps reflecting the matrilineal arrangements of several of the tribes.

See Also: Acoma (Aa'ku), Pueblo People, Ancestors in Creation, Animals in Creation, **Emergence Creation**, Culture Heroes in Creation, Goddess as Creator, Keres, Laguna, Navajo, Spider Woman, Thinking Woman, Twins in Creation.

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THOMPSON INDIANS

The Thompson River Native North Americans of British Columbia are related to the Salishan who live further south. Their creation myth, however, seems to be very much their own. This retelling is based on a story told by an old shaman named Nkamtcine'lx at the turn of the century. The shaman said he had heard the myth from his grandfather.

***

In the beginning of time there was only water everywhere. Old One got tired of looking at all the water, so he came down on a cloud, determined to create something new. When the cloud—now fog—reached the waters, Old One plucked five hairs from his head (some say from his pubic area) and threw them down, and they became five perfect young women, already able to speak, see, and hear. Then he asked the women what they would like to do with their lives.

The first woman said she would like to have many children, be wicked, and pursue her own pleasure. She wanted her descendants to be fighters, murderers, adulterers, thieves, and liars. Old One was sorry for this answer.

The second woman said she too would like to bear children, but that she and her descendants would be good and true people—wise, honest, peaceful, and chaste. Old One praised the second woman and pointed out that in the end her way would triumph over the first woman's.

The third woman said she wanted to be the earth, the place where her sisters and their descendants would live. She would allow the people to take life from her, and she promised to give abundantly of herself. Old One was well pleased with new Earth Mother. He foresaw that she would nurture the world and then take the dead back to herself and keep them warm. She would give forth beautiful trees and plants.

The fourth woman said she planned to be fire, that she would give warmth to the people and help them make their food better. Old One was more than satisfied with this plan.

The fifth woman simply wished to be water.

Then Old One changed the women into their wishes for themselves. The third woman lay down in the waters and became the Earth Mother on which we live. The fifth woman became the waters within Earth, the fourth woman became the spirit of fire in all things that burn. As for the first and second women, Old One placed them on Earth and immediately impregnated them. "You will be the first people," he said, "and from you will come all the people of the earth—male and female." Old One foresaw that at first the evil woman's children would dominate but that eventually the good woman's children would prevail. Old One said he would bring together the five sisters and all of the people—good and evil, dead and alive—at the end of the world.

All of this explains why there are good and bad people on Earth. It also explains how all of us are directly related to earth, fire, and water.

***

It is interesting that Old One's first creative act is to make five women out of his own hair. As is so often the case with native North Americans, women play a dominant role in the earthly aspect of creation. By becoming the world itself, the five women express the animistic or spirit-filled reality of nature that originates with Old Man (the Great Mystery) and that is traditionally a part of the Native American world view. Old man's creation is technically ex nihilo in that it is of himself, but the fact that his created being becomes the earth and its surroundings make it also a world parent creation.

See Also: Animistic Creation, **Ex Nihilo Creation**, Primordial Waters in Creation, Salishan (Flat Heads), Sexual Impulse in Creation, Shamanism in Creation, **World Parent Creation**.

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Tibetan. *See* Bon (Bonpo); Buddhist

TIERRA DEL FUEGO

The tribes of Tierra del Fuego—the Ona, Yahgan, and Alacaluf—live at the southern tip of the world; the islands off Cape Horn. They believe in a supreme being called Temaukl or Xelas. His attributes are many, and his names mean things like One Above, Old One, Father, Good One, Murderer in the Sky, and Star. Most of the people in this region think of the supreme god as also the creator.

***

Before anything else, Temaukl—the forever-existing—was. He made the heavens, earth, and people. He gave life and he gave death, and he still does.

It was Kenos, the first man, who was sent to the world as a culture hero to bring order to it. It was he who made the plants and animals and parceled out the land to the people. The world was and still is a difficult place because of the

constant north-south struggle between a bit of warmth and the desperate cold. The people always leave the god a bit of food or a hot coal in hopes of better weather.

***

Of particular interest in this myth is the fact that the people have no delusions as to the goodness or fairness of the creator. He is simply the source of all things, good and evil, and his many extremes are reflected in the harsh weather that constantly affects these people.

See Also: Culture Heroes in Creation, **Ex Nihilo Creation**.

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TLINGIT

The Tlingit (Lingit, meaning "the people") are a matrilineal Native American society of the Alexander Islands and southeast Alaska. They are culturally close to the Haida and Tsimshian, and like the creation myths of those peoples, the Tlingit myth features the popular Pacific Northwest trickster, Raven.

***

Raven was born to the high power, Kit-ka'ositiyi-qa, who did his best to teach his son how to be a creator of the world. Raven did succeed, but the world he created had no light in it. Raven understood that the world must have light, and he had heard that there was a being in a far away land that had light hidden away somewhere. Raven was determined to get that light and so began his life of trickery on which his world would be based. He found his way to the house of light and discovered that the owner had a daughter. So Raven turned himself into a piece of dirt and went into the daughter's water and was swallowed by her. The daughter became pregnant in this way and a strange baby with fast-moving bright eyes was born. When the baby had grown a bit it kept crying for the interesting bundles that were hanging on the walls of the house. He caused such a noise that the people in the house gave him one of the bags. After playing with it for a while he let it go and it floated up out of the smoke hole in the ceiling. Once in the sky it broke open and stars scattered out. He cried for another bundle and this time the result was the moon. Still another bundle remained and after much commotion it was given to the child. When he let that bundle go it floated up and became daylight. Raven had stolen the light of the world. He followed it through the smoke hole calling out his Raven call—Ca.

Not satisfied with the light, Raven craved water for his world and he got that by tricking a person named Ganu'k into leaving his covered spring unattended. Other tricks, most of them marked by obscenity, insatiable personal appetites, essential amorality, and the misuse of excrement, resulted in other aspects of the world we know and the characteristics of humans and animals.

At one point Raven brought about a flood. He came to a cliff in which lived a woman who controlled the tides. He found his way into the cliff and made the woman raise the tides to cover the earth. Humans were destroyed, but Raven made

new humans out of leaves while the old humans became stones. This is why humans die, just as leaves do. Some of the people he made were the Tlingit, the Haida, and the Tsimshian, but he made things difficult for them by giving them all different languages.

***

Raven is never a loving creator. As a trickster, he creates for his own pleasure and feeds on his own creation. The belief behind such a creator would seem to be a sense that as full of wonders as it may be, the world has evolved from an amoral source. Raven is a culture hero in the sense that he teaches the people the ways to live, but he is a culture hero who makes no pretense at wishing his creation well.

See Also: Animals in Creation, **Creation from Chaos**, Culture Heroes in Creation, Death Origin in Creation, Flood in Creation, Haida, Raven in Creation, Trickster in Creation, Tsimshian.

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TOLTEC

The Toltecs are thought to have been refugees from the c 700 C.E. fall of the ancient Teothihuacán culture in central Mexico. In the 10th century they founded their capital city of Tula and, in terms of mythology, were a link between the cultures of Teotihuacán and the Aztecs. Theirs is an ex nihilo creation myth.

***

The creator made five worlds and suns in succession. These creations were based, in turn, on earth, fire, air, water, and rock. The people of the first world were bad and were eaten by ocelots. The second world was populated by unwise humans who were turned into monkeys. In the third world the people were not pious, so their world was destroyed by fire. The fourth world was drowned by a great flood. When each of these worlds was destroyed, its sun died too.

Now in the darkness, the gods met to decide who would light up the fifth world—the present world. Tecciztecatl thought he would gain much fame by volunteering. The gods made a great fire on top of a pyramid and told Tecciztecatl that it was time to light up the world. "How?" asked the god. The others told him to jump into the fire. But Tecciztecatl, who was dressed in fine feathers and jewels, became frightened and could not bring himself to jump. It was then that the insignificant god, Nanautzin, ugly and misshapen as he was, came forward and jumped into the fire. Ashamed, Tecciztecatl jumped too and the new sun rose from the fire.

***

Although technically an ex nihilo myth, the emphasis on the several successive worlds places this myth close to the emergence category favored by so many Native Americans of what is now the southwestern United States. The assumption of a strong connection between the indigenous peoples of the two neighboring areas is logical.

See Also: Animals in Creation, Aztec (Mexica), **Emergence Creation**, **Ex Nihilo Creation**,

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TONGA

The people of the islands of Tonga, about 400 miles southeast of the Fiji Islands in the South Pacific, are Polynesians who probably descended from Fiji Islanders who arrived in Tonga in about 1000 B.C.E. Tonga is the only Polynesian state that remains a monarchy. The Tongan world parent creation myth below is an example of creation through the division of a primordial entity.

***

In the time of darkness at the beginning, the gods Vatea and Tonga-iti fought over a child. Each said the child belonged to him. Finally they agreed to cut the child in two. Vatea took the top half, squeezed it into a ball, and threw it into the sky, where it became the sun. Tonga-iti did the same with his half, but only after it had spent some days on the ground, bleeding. His half, therefore, became the somewhat pale and drained moon.

***

Although somewhat gruesome, this myth serves to establish the sacredness of the sun and moon, both of which are embodiments of the divine child of the original creators.

See Also: Animistic Creation, Dismemberment of Primordial Being as Creation, Polynesian, Sacrifice in Creation, Sun in Creation, **World Parent Creation**.

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TRUK ISLAND

Truk is one of the Caroline Islands in the South Pacific that are part of Chuuk, itself one of the four Micronesian states along with the Marshall Islands, the Gilbert Islands, and the Mariana Islands.

***

The people of Truk Island say the sky god's daughter, Ligoububfanu, was the mother of humans, animals, coconuts, and grain. It is said that her first child's face is stamped on the coconut.

***

This is a world parent creation myth in that everything in creation is literally the offspring of the sky god by way of his daughter.

See Also: Animals in Creation, Goddess as Creator, Gilbert Islands, Incest in Creation, Mariana Islands, Marshall Islands, Sexual Impulse in Creation, **World Parent Creation**.

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TSIMSHIAN

The Tsimshian people are a Native American tribe living in southern Alaska

and coastal British Columbia. They are culturally close to the Tlingit and Haida. All three cultures have creation myths that center around the Northwest creator-trickster, Raven.

***

When the world was still dark, there was a chief whose son got sick and died. The parents mourned their son and made everyone else do so as well. One morning the mother went to look at her son's body and was surprised to find a dazzling young man there. He had been sent by the sun, he said, to stop the wailing of the parents and their people. The parents thought this was their son returned.

The young man, despite the urging of the mother, would not eat. Then he met two slaves, one male and one female, called Mouth at Both Ends. After meeting them and being affected by their power, he ate everything there was to eat in the settlement. The chief gave him a Raven's mask and renamed him Giant. The chief also gave Raven-Giant a bladder full of seeds and suggested that he fly to the mainland and plant them for food. He also gave him a stone to rest on in case he got tired.

Raven-Giant stole daylight so the world could be light and so his plants would grow. He did this by flying up to Heaven and hiding in the drinking bucket of the big chief's daughter there. When she drank, she swallowed him and became pregnant. Then he was born in the sky chief's house and was able to steal some light. Raven-Giant brought all sorts of things to humans—including death.

***

There are other Tsimshian myths of the coming of light. This one is based on a story told to anthropologist Franz Boas by a Tsimshian Indian in 1916.

***

In the beginning, the chief in the sky lived in the heavens with two sons, Walking-About-Early and The-One-Who-Walks-All-Over-the-Sky, and a daughter, Support-of-Sun, and a large tribe of followers. But there was no light. The chief's children were all strong, but The-One-Who-Walks-All-Over-the-Sky was the smartest. It was he who was most upset by the ever-present darkness. So one day he got his brother to help him make a cedar stick into a ring out of which they made a mask. Then they lit the mask and The-One-Who-Walks-All-Over-the-Sky put it on and headed east. Now the people were amazed to see a great light coming out of the eastern sky. The-One-Who-Walks-All-Over-the-Sky had to keep moving so he wouldn't burn up. He took the mask off at night in the west but repeated his run each day.

The tribe formed a council to say how much they liked the light, but they begged the chief to slow down his son so that they could have more light each day. The boy told his father this would be impossible, as the mask would burn up if he slowed down.

Finally, Support-of-Sun said she would try to slow down her brother. So the next day, when the light rose from the east, Support-of-Sun came out of the south and called out to her brother, "Wait up!" She caught up with him and tried to hold him, but eventually he broke free.

This is why the sun stops for a while in the middle of the sky at noon time. The people were delighted.

But now the sky chief complained that his older son, Walking-About-Early, was not as smart as his younger son. Greatly upset, Walking-About-Early threw himself onto the ground and cried. When his younger brother—the sun—came home to rest, Walking-About-Early disguised his face with fat and charcoal, and he told his slave to jump up and greet him loudly when he arose in the east. Meanwhile his brother, the sun, came back tired from his daily trip and lay down to rest. Now The-One-Who-Walks-All-Over-the-Sky's bright face caused some light to come out of the smoke hole of his house. And when Walking-About-Early rose in the east, that light reflected off his charcoal-disguised face. When the slave made noise to announce his rising, the people looked to the east and were amazed to see what we now know was the moon.

Later the sky chief created the animals in the land below the sky—our world. In council, the animals decided on the path of the sun from east to west. And they agreed that the sun should give light and should provide growth for plants. There was a discussion about the cycle of the moon. When the dogs suggested that the cycle take forty days, the porcupine pointed out that this would make the year too long and that there should be only 30 days in each cycle. The other animals agreed, and so it is. Irritated at the stupidity of the dogs, the animals sent them out of the council. So it is that dogs still hate animals of the woods—especially porcupines.

In the council, the animals went on to name the months: Falling-Leaf Month, Taboo Month, The Intervening Month, Spring Salmon Month, Month When Olachen Is Eaten, Month When Olachen Is Cooked, Egg Month, Salmon Month, Humpback-Salmon Month, and Spinning Top Month.

Meanwhile, in the sky, sparks came from The-One-Who-Walks-All-Over-the-Sky's mouth when he was asleep, and these became the stars. But now, disappointed that she had had so small a role in all of this, Support-of-Sun wandered into the water in the west and became all wet. Feeling cold, she came back to her father's fireside and the fire and the water created fog that to this day helps to calm down the heat of the sun. Please with his three children, the chief established their regular roles forever.

***

The first myth, featuring the ubiquitous Raven, is a creation from chaos myth; the seeds taking the place of the usual cosmic egg. The second myth, in which sky characters become permanent aspects of creation, is a world parent myth with a strong etiological tone, as it explains the rhythms of time in nature.

See Also: Animals in Creation, **Creation from Chaos**, Etiological Creation Myths, Haida, Raven in Creation, Sun in Creation, Tlingit, Trickster in Creation, **World Parent Creation**.

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TUAMOTUAN

The Polynesian Tuamotuan people of the Tuamotuan Archipelago of French Polynesia in the South Pacific probably migrated to these islands from the Society Islands (including Tahiti) early in the eighth century C.E. The Tuamotu creator god is Kiho, who created from nothingness by the power of his words and thoughts.

***

Kiho lived alone in the emptiness under Havaiki, or nonland. He had no parents, no mate. His only company was his double, his Activating Self. He thought within himself and acted through the Activating Self.

Kiho evolved the dark waters first and then the night world of the spirits. Then came the day world of our earth and finally the sky world.

This is how it happened: Kiho awoke and gazed into the immemorial chaos. Then he spoke what it was—"the total darkness of Havaiki."

Kiho thought of things and called on his Activating Self to give concreteness to his inner knowledge. Then the creative urge within the primeval waters and the land began to live. Beneath Havaiki, sleeping fruitfulness, sleeping sky, and sleeping land began to awaken.

Then Kiho gave utterance to the primordial waters and they began to be real. He called on his Activating Self to bring earthquakes to the rock foundations of Havaiki. He made his eyes into flames and there was light. Kiho floated up from the depths as his Activating Self and lay on the waters. He created the night world and the day world. Gradually Kiho raised himself and created the heavens and the earth. Next he made Atea-ragi, the male force, and Fakahotuhenua, the female force—the "fructifier of the soil."

Kiho turned now to organizing the world—placing the sand and sea in their proper places—and he organized the heavens. The Activating Self of Kiho was incarnated to become the ruler of the world, and Kiho drifted back to non-being.

***

Not surprisingly, the myths of these people resemble those of the Maoris and other Polynesians. There are also elements of the Indian creation story with its sleeping gods and its sense of time breaking into the timelessness of Brahman.

See Also: **Ex Nihilo Creation**, Polynesian, Primordial Waters in Creation, Thought-based Creation, Word-based Creation.

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TUNGUS

Probably originally from Manchuria, the Tungus peoples, various groups speaking the Tungusic language of the Altaic family of languages, live in northern China and eastern Siberia. Traditionally they are a shamanic people. Tungus creation myths such as the one below have characteristics in common with other Siberian-Central Asian creation myths.

***



Tungus Shaman Witch Doctor with drum. (© Bettmann/CORBIS)

In the beginning there were only the waters until God sent down fire. The fire burnt part of the ocean, and land came. As soon as God set foot on the new land He found Buninka, the devil, there. Buninka wanted to create his own world, and he got so angry when God refused to let him do so that he broke God's lyre.

God challenged Buninka to make a tree out of the water to prove his powers. Buninka agreed, but the pine tree he created was weak and it leaned over. God created a tree that was strong and constantly growing. Buninka therefore recognized God's power over him and all things.

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As in so many Siberian myths, the devil plays an active, if negative, role in creation. This creation from chaos myth is really a reflection of the struggle between witchcraft and true shamanism. Here we also find the world tree as axis mundi, or world center, motif as in Norse and other mythologies.

See Also: Axis Mundi in Creation, Central Asian, **Creation from Chaos**, Devil in Creation, Shamanism and Creation.

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TURKIC (PRE-ISLAMIC TURKISH)

Turkic peoples speaking Turkic languages of the Altaic family of Mongolia and other areas of Central Asia migrated in the middle ages into the Iranian Plateau and Anatolia. Before converting to other religions—especially Islam—these peoples practiced a shamanic religion sometimes referred to as Tengriism, centering on an ideal of a harmonious world under the sky deity Tengri and Mother Earth.

***

The great white Goose Tengri (Tengri Ülgen) flew over the primordial waters (Time). At the urging of the White Mother below he began to create. First, in his loneliness, he created Er Kishi, a devil-like figure who supposedly would help the creator. Er Kishi undermined the creation, however, and Tengri Ülgen left to remain in Heaven, where from he sent sacred animals to guide the people he had created. Shamans made their way to the fifth heaven to consult with the divine spirits.

***

The myth here resembles other Central Asian myths in its representation of creation undermined by a devil-trickster figure, suggesting a sense of the imperfection of the world. Harmony can only be re-achieved by interceding with the high god through sacred animals and shamans.

See Also: Animals in Creation, Central Asian, **Creation from Chaos**, Earth Mother, Primordial Waters in Creation, Shamanism and Creation, Sky Father, Trickster in Creation.

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TUSCARORA

The Tuscarora are a Iroquoian speaking people who migrated to New York state from North Carolina in the early 18th century in order to avoid an ongoing war and general oppression. In New York they joined their fellow Iroquois of the Five Nation Federation, making it a six nation group. Not surprisingly, their earth-diver creation myth closely resembles that of the other Iroquoians.

***

In the beginning there were two worlds, an upper world where beings that resembled humans lived, and a lower world of the primeval waters and darkness where monsters and a few animals lived. A time came when a woman in the upper world, now known as Sky Woman, came down to the lower world and landed on the back of a turtle, which became the world. Certain animals dove into the waters to find mud and that mud grew into Earth on the Turtle's back.

Sky Woman gave birth to twins and then died. The twins were Good Mind and Bad Mind. Good Mind created the sun out of his mother's head and other cosmic bodies out of other parts of her body to give light to Earth. Good Mind also made humans out of the mud as well as the plants and good animals. Meanwhile, Bad Mind, who hated his brother, made dangerous animals and natural objects that brought pain and death to the people. Finally, the twins fought for two days. Good Mind won

and Bad Mind was sent down into the earth, from which place he still plagues humanity.

***

This myth emphasizes the duality that pervades creation. It also stresses the importance of the female side of humanity in the creative process. It reminds us that we are all children of the Mother—Earth itself in the form of the mud from the maternal waters and the feminine creative force as represented by the woman from the sky. Not surprisingly, the Iroquois are matrilineal.

See Also: Animals in Creation, Animistic Creation, Cherokee, Duality in Creation, **Earth-Diver Creation**, Huron, Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Primordial Waters in Creation, Seneca, Sky Woman Descends, Twins in Creation, Two Creators Motif.

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UITOTO

The Uitoto are an indigenous people of the Amazonian jungle in Columbia. In their unusual creation story the illusion of reality exists before reality itself. The creator, Nainema, is also known as "Father with an Illusion." He dreams and thinks the world into existence ex nihilo.

***

First there was only a vision, an illusion that affected Nainema, who was himself the illusion. Nothing else existed. Nainema took the illusion to himself and fell into thought. He held the vision by the thread of a dream and searched it, but he found nothing. Then he searched it again, and he tied the emptiness to the dream thread with magical glue. Then he took the bottom of the phantasm and stamped on it until he could sit down upon this earth of which he had dreamed. As he held onto the illusion, he spat out saliva and the forests grew. He lay down on the earth and made a sky above it. Gazing at himself, the One who was the story created his story for us to hear.

***

This mind-teasing myth, by implication, explores the relationship between illusion and reality, asking whether we ourselves and our world might be merely illusion. Although a deus faber act involving saliva and glue seems real and physical enough, even that act involved the thread of dreams, and creation appears ultimately to be a function of the creator's gaze as he gazes at the illusion that is himself.

See Also: Australian Aborigine, Bodily Waste or Fluids as Creation Source, Deus Faber Creation, Dreaming as Creation, **Ex Nihilo Creation**, Thought-based Creation.

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UTE

The Ute of southwestern Colorado and Utah (Ute>Utah) are an Uto-Aztec-Shoshonean speaking tribe. They tell an animistic ex nihilo creation from chaos myth.

***

In the beginning Manitou, or Great He-She Spirit, lived alone in the sky. There were only sky, clouds, sun, and rain with the spirit. Manitou decided to make something different, so He-She drilled a hole in the sky to look down to the vast emptiness. He-She poured rain and snow into the hole, then took the dirt and stones from the hole and poured that through as well.

Later, when Manitou looked down, there was a mountain where he had poured the dirt; there were lots of other mountains, too, and a great plain. He-She stepped down onto the big mountain and immediately improved it by producing trees and plants with a mere touch. Manitou improved the plains by waving his hands over them, bringing sweet grasses. He-She caused the sun to shine through the hole made earlier; this melted the snow, bringing streams and rivers that flowed into the oceans—the sky blue waters, who stole their color from the sky.

Then came rain and the fruition of the earth, and He-She continued making things. The broken-off ends of his cane were made into fish. He-She had to breathe on them to give them life. The Utes used to eat fish, but they don't anymore because once some wicked people threw their dead victims into the water, and it is impossible to tell the right fish from the fish who used to be the dead people.

Manitou also made birds out of the beautiful leaves in the forest. Eagles came from oak leaves, hawks from red sumac, and so forth. He-She made animals from the middle of his cane. The animals lived in harmony until Coyote caused trouble and the animals began to fight. Manitou decided to make a boss animal that would rule wisely and keep things in order. This is why he made Grizzly Bear, who is still chief among animals. After creating the bear and establishing laws of behavior, Manitou left for the heavens.

***

This Manitou figure, which, as a He-She, transcends human understanding, creates ex nihilo and infuses all of creation with its spirit, reflecting the Ute sense of the need to live in harmony with all of nature. As in the case of many other Native American and Central Asian creations, creation is somewhat undermined by the figure of the trickster, who embodies the selfish nature of human beings.

See Also: Animals in Creation, Coyote in Creation, **Creation from Chaos**, Devil in Creation, **Ex Nihilo Creation**, Trickster in Creation.

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Vedic. *See* Indian

VIETNAMESE

The majority ethnic group of Vietnam—the Kinh—originated in the north of the country and in southern China. Vietnamese culture is deeply influenced by Chinese culture, although there are strong indigenous traditions peculiar to the area. In terms of mythology, there is not a great deal of emphasis on the creation of the cosmos itself. There is a story of the separation of sky and earth to allow space for the development of the world, and there is a popular story of the origins of human beings in general and the Vietnamese people in particular. The separation of sky and earth to create order out of chaos is, of course, a common motif found in creation myths in all parts of the world. The origin of "the people," the Vietnamese version of which is told in the second myth below, is also a common theme.

***

Long ago Sky and Earth were all mixed together in a general chaos and darkness. A giant, Khônghos, somehow appeared At first the giant was creation itself, his breath the wind, his voice the thunder. Then he raised the sky from the earth by pushing up with his head and he maintained the separation by building a huge pillar that went up from the earth and turned the sky into a great ceiling-bowl. Later, he pulled down the pillar, broke it up, and flung it all about. The pieces of pillar became familiar landscape elements. The ditches left by the giant's digging for pillar material became waterways. A giant turtle's breathing caused the tides. When a giant female figure came into being, the creator giant fell in love with her, but the female resisted him and was the larger and stronger of the two. Before she would agree to marry her suitor, she challenged him to several contests and always won. It was in the course of these frequently earth-changing contests that much of the world as we know it—mountains, rivers, and so forth—were formed. Finally, the giantess accepted the giant and they were married. On the way to the wedding ceremony, the giant stretched his phallus across a river to serve as a bridge for his companions. When one of the friends dropped hot ashes on the penis, the giant jumped, and half of the men fell into the water, only to be rescued by the giantess, who hid them under her dress to dry.

***

Another version of the story tells how the sea-based Dragon Lord, Lac Long-Quān, married the earth-based but immortal mountain fairy, Lady Au-Co. Soon after their coupling Au-Co gave birth to a sack containing 100 eggs, and in seven days the eggs produced 100 boys. After some time, the Dragon Lord wished to separate from his earth-bound wife to return to his proper home in the sea. Each parent took 50 sons. Au-Co took her sons to the highlands and one of the sons became Hung Vuong, the culture hero who taught the new Van-lang tribe—the Vietnamese—how to live properly.

***

In some versions of the story of the Dragon Lord and Au-Co, the two sets of sons reconcile, expressing the successful establishment of a mutually beneficial

relationship between the earth and sea that would remove the need for the earlier struggles of the people to protect themselves from the incursions of the waters. A strange aspect of the myth is the absence of daughters among the original eggs. We only know that when the first king hunted, he took with him his sons and his daughters.

***

Other stories tell how it was the Ngoc Hoang—the Vietnamese version of the Chinese Jade Emperor (Yu)—who, after the separation of Heaven and Earth, created animals out of rough pieces of the sky and earth and humans out of the original chaos. With the humans he had the help of the 12 heavenly Midwives. The Sun and Moon, daughters of the creator, were assigned to give light and warmth to the world. At first there was a perfect golden age when people were immortal and rice and warmth were plentiful. But when the people became lazy and forgot the commands of the creator, it became necessary to work to achieve shelter and sustenance. As for immortality, it was denied humans only because a messenger, who was sent by the creator to tell humans they could live forever by shedding their skins when they became old, was convinced by snakes to allow them that privilege rather than the humans.

***

Common to all of these myths is their primary concern to establish the validity of the Vietnamese identity.

See Also: Animals in Creation, Cosmic Egg in Creation, **Creation from Chaos**, Culture Heroes in Creation, Separation of Heaven and Earth in Creation.

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WAHUNGWE

The Wahungwe people of Zimbabwe tell the following mysterious creation myth. It is nearly identical to one told by the Wakaranga people of the same region.

***

In the beginning Maori created the first man, Mwuetsi, who was the moon. He placed him at the bottom of the waters, Dsivoa, with a ngona horn filled with ngona oil, but Mwuetsi insisted that he wanted to live on the earth. Maori did not approve, but he placed Mwuetsi on Earth, saying that living there would end in his death.

On Earth Mwuetsi found only barrenness, and he complained to Maori. "I warned you," said Maori, but he sent the man a woman to keep him company. This woman was Massassi, the morning star, to whom Maori gave the gift of fire. Maori said Mwuetsi could keep Massassi with him for two years.

The first couple went at night into their cave. Mwuetsi gathered kindling and Massassi made fire by twirling the firemaker. Then the man lay on one side of the fire and the woman on the other. Mwuetsi lay awake wondering why God had sent him the maiden. Finally, he took the ngona horn he had been given and moistened his finger with some of the oil. He leapt over the fire and touched

Massassi with his oiled finger. Then he went back to his side and slept.

In the morning Massassi was huge, and soon she gave birth to plants and trees until the whole earth was covered by them.

The couple lived well and happily; they learned to build, to trap, and to grow vegetables. Mwuetsi worked on gathering wood and water, Massassi cooked. At the end of the two years, however, Maori took Massassi away, and Mwuetsi wept for eight years.

Then Maori reminded Mwuetsi of his original warnings against coming to Earth. He sent another woman, Morongo, the Evening Star, however, saying she also could stay two years. When on the first night Mwuetsi touched Morongo with his oiled finger, she told him she was not like Massassi, and that he would have to oil their loins and then have intercourse with her. This Mwuetsi did that night and each night after that. Every morning Morongo gave birth to the animals of creation. On the fourth morning she gave birth to human boys and girls, who were grown by nighttime.

On the fourth night Maori sent a terrible storm and again warned Mwuetsi that he was heading toward his death with all of this procreation. Morongo, now a temptress, told Mwuetsi to build a door so Maori could not see what they were doing, and the man and woman continued to sleep together against God's command. The next morning Morongo gave birth to the violent animals—the lions, leopards, scorpions, and snakes.

On the fifth night Morongo told Mwuetsi to have intercourse with his daughters, and he did. His daughters bore children and became the mothers of the people. Mwuetsi became the Mambo—great chief—of his people. He lived in Zimbabwe, the royal precinct.

One night Morongo coupled with a snake, and, afterward, when Mwuetsi wished to sleep with her one day she was reluctant. Mwuetsi insisted, and in the night his wife's snake-lover bit him and he became ill. As his sickness increased, the rivers and the fruits of the earth dried up. Even the animals and people died. The sacred dice said that only if Mwuetsi were sent back to the depths would things become better, so the children of Mwuetsi strangled him and buried him. They also buried Morongo with him. The two years were up, and death had come as Maori had said it would.

Each morning the Mwuetsi, the moon, rises from the sea and follows his beloved first wife, Massassi, the morning star, across the heavens.

***

The relationship of Morongo and the snake and the subsequent origin of death is an African version of the femme fatale archetype found in many mythologies, including the genesis story. What the story makes clear an essential truth of life—that with fertility and life comes death; life is, in effect, death-defined.

See Also: Animals in Creation, Death Origin in Creation, Etiological Creation Myths, **Ex Nihilo Creation**, Fall from Grace in Creation, Incest in Creation, Origin of Evil in Creation, Sexual Impulse in Creation, **World Parent Creation**.

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WAPANGWA

A people of Tanzania, the Wapangwa tell a chaos-based creation story that contains the theme of excretory creation, a flood, and a creator known as the Word.

***

Before there was a sun, a moon, or stars, there was only the wind and a tree where some ants lived. There was also the Word, which controlled everything, but the Word could not be seen. The Word was a catalyst for creation.

Once the wind became angry at the tree for standing in its way, so it blew particularly hard, tearing off a branch on which there were white ants. When they landed, the ants were hungry, so they ate all of the leaves on the branch, sparing only one, on which they defecated a huge pile.

Then they had no choice but to eat their own excrement, and over time, as they ate and redeposited their excrement, the pile became a mountain that finally spread to the original tree. By then the ants preferred excrement to leaves, and they continued the process of adding to the pile until it became the earth.

The wind still blew on the world so strongly that parts of the excrement pile began to harden into stone. The world gradually formed, until the Word sent snow and then warm wind, which melted the snow and brought a huge flood. The waters killed the ants; there was water covering everything.

Later the earth and the world tree joined, and the trees, grasses, rivers, and oceans took form. The air gave birth to beings that flew about singing. These beings came to Earth and became animals, birds, and humans, each with its own song or language.

The new beings were hungry. The animals wanted to eat the Tree of Life, but the humans defended it. This led to a huge war between humans and animals, and to the tradition of humans and animals eating each other. The war was so ferocious that the earth shook, and bits and pieces of it flew off, gained heat, and became the sun, moon, and stars.

After the war there was the creation of gods, rain, thunder, and lightning. A long-tailed sheep with a single horn was so happy at the end of the great war that she leapt into the air, caught fire, and became the source of thunder and lightning.

The new gods who sprang up were harsh with humans. One of them told the people that the sheep that had sprung into the air had killed the Word, the ultimate creator, and that the people would be reduced in size and in the end would be consumed by fire.

***

The association of what appears to be a decidedly non-anthropomorphic creator as the "Word" must remind the reader of the Greek concept of *Logos,* translated as the "Word" in the Christian creation narrative of John. It also

can be said to be an archetypal relative of the Hindu concept of the impersonal but ever-present Brahman who is also associated with the primal word, Ohm. The Wapangu story presents an original view of the world tree motif as well, with the animals rather than, for instance, the Eve figure, wanting to eat of it. At the source of this myth are a realistic view of the relationship between humans and animals and a somewhat pessimistic understanding of the overall makeup of things in this world, an understanding emphasized by the great war between humans and animals and the belief that creation itself was the product of excrement.

See Also: Animals in Creation, Axis Mundi in Creation, Bodily Waste or Fluids as Creation Source, Brahman, Christian, **Creation from Chaos**, Fall from Grace in Creation, Flood in Creation Myths, Word-based Creation.

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WELSH

A Celtic people of the British Isles, the Welsh possess a rich mythology that contains stories that parallel Irish mythology but are also distinct in plot and character. Much of Welsh mythology is contained in the collection of tales known as the *Mabinogion*. There are also apocryphal collections of doubtful authenticity that contain what could be called myths. The *Barddas*, a collection of Bardo-Druidic lore is such a collection—it contains the rudiments of a creation story that must be taken somewhat skeptically.

***

When God was alone in the universe, the only life and reality being within Himself, He said His own name, and the voice was so beautiful that the universe burst into being with sound, light, and form.

***

The art of music and poetry is essential to the Welsh tradition, as it is to the Irish. In some sense the great mythical Celtic poet prophets (Taliesen in Wales) sing the world into existence much as God does in the myth above.

See Also: **Ex Nihilo Creation**, Indian, Word-based Creation.

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WINNEBAGO

The history of the Native North American Winnebago is marked by constant migration, much of it forced by white settlers of the upper Midwest. The Winnebago lived for a time in Wisconsin and Minnesota and are now mostly on what was Omaha land in Nebraska. They speak a Siouan language and their religion is influenced by Algonquian neighbors such as the Anishinabe/Ojibwe, whose Great Spirit Creator, the Kitchi Manitou, is equivalent to the Winnebago Manuna, or "Earth Maker."

There are several versions of what is essentially an ex nihilo creation story told by the Winnebago. The retelling below is based on a combination of several versions.

***

Things began when Earth Maker came to consciousness and realized he was alone. Taking a bit of whatever it was he was resting on, he made a ball and sent it flying into space as the world. He made hair for the naked Earth out of grass, but the earth did not stop spinning. He thought of a tree, made one, and threw it down, and other trees grew up. He made the four directions and made rocks that became mountains. These stopped the wild spinning of the earth, and the sun came out. Earth Maker then created the birds, land animals, and fish.

He thought next of humankind, making these weak beings last. He did it by shaping a bit of earth in his own image. The man could neither see, hear, nor speak. Earth Maker put a finger into his own ear and then into the human's ear, and then the man could hear. He did the same between his eyes and the man's and between his mouth and the man's, and then the man could also see and speak.

The man did not seem to know what to say, however, and Earth Maker understood that he needed something more to make him whole. So it was that he breathed life into the man with his own breath so he and the man could converse.

Finally Earth Maker sent the man into the world and split him into the many peoples who live here now.

***

A slightly different version of the story suggests that the lonely creator made the first man by mixing a part of his own body, from the region of his heart, with earth. Then he created three more men. The four men are the four winds—the four directions. Finally he created a woman—Mother Earth, the mother of the Indians. Then he acted as a culture hero, teaching the people how to live.

In still another version, the creator in the beginning began to cry and his tears became the earth below him. Or, some say that the tears became lakes and that then the creator wished for things—light, the earth, people—and they came into being.

Of interest here is the fact that the Great Spirit creates first by thought and then, in the case of humans, with clay. The breathing of life into the humans reflects a common motif in world mythology and expresses a sense of an essential relationship between the creator and human life, breath being usually equated with spirit or soul.

See Also: Anishinabe (Ojibwe, Chippewa), Bodily Waste or Fluids as Creation Source, Clay-based Creation, Culture Hero in Creation, **Ex Nihilo Creation**, Four Directions in Creation, Thought-based Creation.

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WYANDOT

The Wyandot people were originally based in southern Ontario, but various

wars led them to Ohio and eventually to Kansas. They are related to the Huron and speak an Iroquoian language (Huron-Wendet). Not surprisingly, their creation myth, of which there are many versions, will be somewhat familiar to readers of the Huron and Iroquoian woman falling from the sky and earth-diver myths. The Turtle is almost always a central figure in these myths.

***

One myth says that Little Turtle was the creator of the sun—a council of the animals ordered him to create it. It is said that he married the sun to the moon and that the frolicking stars are their children.

***

A more commonly told myth begins with the days when the people—the Wyandot—lived somewhere in the sky.

***

There was a woman there who was in charge of harvesting the small corn crop that belonged to all the people. But one day the woman cut down the stalks before they were ready, thus destroying the crop. The men were furious at her and threw her through a hole in the sky. Meanwhile, down below, where there was nothing but water, some geese noticed something falling down from the sky. So they formed a group so that the object, which was, of course, the sky woman, would have something to land on. When the geese became tired from the woman's weight, The Great Turtle came by and agreed to carry the woman on her shell. Then the Toad dove into the depths and brought up a bit of dirt and instructed the woman on how to place it in bits around the Turtle's shell. This the woman did, and soon land began to grow around the Turtle. When there was enough of it the woman got off of the Turtle and lived on the new island.

Now the woman thought she would like children. She went out to chop wood and found two sons. As soon as they were old enough the woman made them bows and arrows and told them to hunt. But the children were not the same. The younger one was evil and the older one was good. The older one made good things and the younger one destroyed them. The good brother made sugar maples full of syrup, for instance, and right away the evil brother pumped water into the trees so that it would be necessary to spend hours boiling down the sap before the syrup formed.

The good brother made two people and some fruit trees, but he told the new people not to eat the fruit of these trees. But the evil brother, with the help of a corrupted serpent, convinced the new woman to eat the fruit and she did and she gave some to the man. The result of this act was the creator's curse. The people would now have to work and eventually they would die. And that's the way things are.

***

It is obvious that the influence of Christian missionaries plays a significant role in this myth. The first part of the story is in the Iroquoian tradition. But tacked on is the Adam and Eve-Garden of Eden myth, which is substituted for the usual story of the two brothers who

are the source of good and evil in the world.

See Also: Animals in Creation, Duality in Creation, **Earth-Diver Creation**, Huron, Iroquois, Sky Woman Descends, Thought-based Creation.

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WYOT

The Wyot (Wiyot, Wishosk) people of the north California coast spoke an Algonquian language. Their culture was overrun during the days of the gold rush. Like so many California tribes, the Wyots tell a story of an imperfect creation and a flood.

***

Old Man in the Heavens created people, but they turned out all furry, and he decided to get rid of them with a flood. Condor somehow knew about this and made a basket into which he and his sister climbed. Soon they were floating, and after a time they made a hole in the basket and looked out. They saw land, animals, birds, and things, but no more furry people. Condor decided to mate with his sister, and the first real people were born. They looked just right, and they made more people. Old Man in the Heavens was happy.

***

There is some indication in this myth of the influence of Christian missionaries. Note, for instance, the basket/ark. The incest motif and the transition from furry—that is to say animal—to human creation seems, however, to be purely Indian in origin.

See Also: Animals in Creation, **Ex Nihilo Creation**, Fall from Grace in Creation, Flood in Creation Myths, Incest in Creation, Imperfect or Accidental Creation, Sexual Impulse in Creation.

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YAKIMA

The Yakima are Native North American mountain people of eastern Washington, originally along the Columbia and Yakima Rivers. They are of the Shahaptian language group that also includes the Nez Perce. Their creation story has a strong earth-diver aspect.

***

First there was water everywhere and only the great sky chief, Whe-me-me-ow-ah, to see it. The chief went to where the water was shallow and brought up handfuls of mud that turned into land. Some of the piles were high enough to freeze and become mountains. Whe-me-me-ow-ah made trees grow and also fruits and grasses. He made a man out of a bit of the mud.

He taught the man how to hunt and fish. The man was missing something, so Whe-me-me-ow-ah made a woman to be with him. He taught her how to make baskets and how to collect and prepare food. One night, the woman had a dream in which Whe-me-me-ow-ah

gave her a quality that no one could see or touch but that women pass on to their daughters.

The people began fighting, even though the world they had was good. Mother Earth became so angry at them that she shook herself violently and many people died under falling rocks and mountains. These people still live as spirits on the mountaintops. They can be heard wailing and moaning all the time. It is said that a time will come when the Great Spirit will uncover the bones of the destroyed people and the spirits will return to those who in life were true followers of the elders' beliefs.

***

The primary purpose of this myth appears to be to remind the people of their social duties and moral standards in connection with their origins in the great sky chief. It is notable that the god himself lives among the people and acts as a typical culture hero, teaching them proper ways to live. Instead of a flood, the creator sends an earthquake to destroy the original people, who had fallen away from their creator's ways. He does so, realistically, by way of Mother Earth. The fact that the creator gives women a particular mysterious quality indicates that women are much respected by the Yakima people.

See Also: Culture Heroes in Creation, **Earth-Diver Creation**, Fall from Grace in Creation, Flood in Creation Myths, Nez Perce.

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YAMI

The Yami (Yumu) are an indigenous Taiwanese people who live on Lanyu (Botel Tobago) or Orchid Island off the tip of Taiwan. Their origins are perhaps Polynesian. The Yami are known for their traditional underground houses that were built for protection from storms. They have no chiefs and are governed by elected elders. In the Yami creation story a stone and a plant become cosmic eggs of sorts.

***

The Creator looked down from the heavens and liked the island of the Yami, and he dropped a stone on the place that would become Ipaptok Village (a paptok is a bean plant from which the first people got food). When the stone hit the ground, a man came out, and he ate of the plant. As he walked about later, he saw a piece of bamboo growing on the shore. It divided, and a man stepped out. One of the men asked the other, "Who are we?" and the other said, "We are man."

Bamboo son walked one way, and found silver, while Stone son found iron. The two sons came home and worked on the iron and silver—one hard, one soft. One day a boy child burst from the swollen right knee of Bamboo son and a girl sprang from his left knee. The same thing happened to Stone son. The children grew, and in time they married properly: Bamboo with Stone, Stone with Bamboo. Everyone was happy.

Then the people made canoes. Bamboo son's silver axe was too soft to fell trees, so the people made beautiful helmets out of the silver and kept the iron for axes. The canoes were beautifully

designed, but Bamboo's son put the support ribs on the inside of his canoe and it broke up at sea. Stone son's ribs were on the outside, and his canoe survived, but it leaked. He fixed the leak with the fiber of the kulau tree, which the people still use today to make plugs for stopping leaks.

In their silver helmets and outer-ribbed canoes, the people celebrate the sacred fish-calling at the Flying Fish Festival by the singing of Ipaptok, where man first burst out of the dark nothingness.

***

This myth is clearly intended to justify Yami ways—from boat building to proper marriages that carefully avoid incest. It is also clear, however, that unlike many creation myths, this one is concerned with the creation not just of the people whose culture made the myth but of humanity as a whole—that is, mankind.

See Also: Cosmic Egg in Creation, **Creation from Chaos**.

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YANA

A tribe much diminished in size from its original state, the Yana once spoke a Hokan language and lived as hunter-gatherers primarily in the upper Sacramento Valley in California. They told the following creation story.

***

A boy called Pun Miaupa fought with his father and ran away from home to his uncle's house. He announced to his uncle his desire to win Halai Auna (Morning Star) as his wife. His uncle, however, knowing the cruelty of Wakara (Moon, the girl's father), tried to talk his nephew out of the idea, but the boy insisted and left for Wakara's house. The uncle, a shaman, entered his nephew's heart to protect him.

Although Wakara was not outwardly impolite, he set to work immediately to kill the boy by magically transporting his family group to the house of Tuina, the sun. There he assumed that Pun Miaupa would die from the sun's poisoned tobacco. The shaman-uncle in the boy's heart saved him, however, and caused a great flood to drown everyone in Wakara's and Tuina's families except for Halai Auna. It was only because of the girl's unhappiness at the loss of her family that the magician relented and brought the evil ones back to life.

Everyone returned to the home of Wakara, where he proposed a tree bending contest. Because of the uncle's magic, Wakara lost and was flung into the sky, where he remains today. Pun Miaupa and Halai Auna married, and the boy shouted out to Wakara in the sky that he was doomed to stay where he was, growing old, then young, and then old again, forever and ever. Thus the moon has its phases.

***

This story is an origin story as well as a world parent creation myth. It is etiological, since it explains the phases of the moon. The flood aspect of the myth,

however, makes it an archetypal relative of other creation myths around the world.

See Also: Etiological Creation Myths, Fall from Grace in Creation, Flood in Creation Myths, Sexual Impulse in Creation, Shamanism and Creation, **World Parent Creation**.

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YANOMAMI

The Yanomami (Yanomamo) are a rainforest people of the Amazon in South America. Their many creation myths are of the creation from chaos type, often involving creation from bodily fluid.

***

Omam was the creator in one of the stories. To create the people, he had intercourse with a fish woman he caught in a river. To have intercourse with her he had to create her genital parts, as she had none.

***

In another story, there was an ancient time when the people were oppressed by the Moon, who ate the souls of their children. But an ancestor, Suhirina, came along and shot the Moon with his bow and arrow. Out of Moon's blood the new people sprang. These Yanomami people were strong or weak depending on how close to the center of the blood pool they emerged.

***

The second tale is curiously reminiscent of Chinese and Korean tales of the good archer, who used his bow and arrow against heavenly bodies to save his people.

See Also: Ancestors in Creation, Bodily Waste or Fluids as Creation Source, **Creation from Chaos**, Culture Heroes in Creation, Sacrifice in Creation, Sexual Impulse in Creation.

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YAO

A Bantu people of Malawi and Mozambique in southern Africa, the Yao are somewhat matrilineal even though they are primarily Muslim now. Some of the Yao people say they emerged—birth like—from a hole in the earth. Others say they were taken from the waters. It is of interest to note that, as in so many Native American creations, the creator of this African myth is aided by an animal.

***

In the beginning there was only water, the creator, Mulungu, and the animals, until Chameleon found a tiny man and a tiny woman in his otherwise empty fish net. He took the net and the strange creatures to Mulungu, who instructed Chameleon to let them go so they could grow—and grow they did.

The new people learned to make fire, and often they terrified the animals by setting the forest on fire. They learned to hunt, and they killed and ate buffalo and other animals. As for the animals, they learned to flee in horror from humans. Chameleon, for instance, fled into the trees. Mulungu was so disgusted that

he asked the spider to spin a rope so he could escape to the heavens. Mulungu and all of the gods stay away now.

***

The Yao creation myths resemble those of many other African peoples in that they stress the negative role of humankind in destroying the harmony of the natural world, going so far as to suggest that humans chased the gods away.

See Also: Animals in Creation, Deus Otiosus or Absconditus in Creation, **Emergence Creation**, Fall from Grace in Creation, Primordial Waters in Creation, **World Parent Creation**.

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YARURO

The Yaruros are Venezuelan native people whose social arrangements are matrilineal. To this day, the high deity of these people is the Great Mother, Kuma, whom shamans visit in their ritual trances.

***

In the beginning there was nothing. Puana, the water serpent, came and created the world ex nihilo. His brother Itciai, the jaguar, created water. It was their sister, Kuma, who made the Yaruro people. These people became members of the Water Serpent clan or the Jaguar clan. It was only later that other people were created, people like the white Racionales. The Yaruros were given horses, but they were frightened by their size and gave them to the Racionales, who still ride them today while the Yaruros walk or canoe.

At night the Sun, who travels by canoe across the sky, goes to visit his wife, Kuma. The stars are their children. The Sun's sister, the Moon, travels in a larger boat.

Kuma gave the Yaruros good plants, but they cut them from the top so the seeds fell onto the neighboring land of the Racionales. Now the Yaruros have simple fruits while their neighbors have better things, like maize, tobacco, plantains, and bananas.

***

Several other versions of the Yaruro myth are retold here, based on the collections of ethnographer Vincenzo Petrullo.

***

Everything sprang from Kuma, and everything that the Yaruros do was established by her. She is dressed like a shaman, only her ornaments are of gold and much more beautiful.

With Kuma sprang Puana and Itciai; Hatchawa is her grandson and Puana made a bow and arrow for him. Puana taught Hatchawa to hunt and fish. When Hatchawa saw the people at the bottom of a hole and wished to bring them to the top, Puana made him a rope and a hook to use for that purpose.

***

Another figure that sprang with Kuma was Kiberoh. She carried fire in her breast and at Kuma's request gave it to the boy Hatchawa. But when the boy

wanted to give it to the people Kuma refused and he cleverly threw live fish in the fire, spreading coals all about. The people seized the hot coals and ran away to start fires of their own. Everything was at first made and given to the boy and he passed it on to the people. Everybody sprang from Kuma, but she was not made pregnant in the ordinary way. It was not necessary.

***

The first to appear was Kuma, the chief of all of us and the entire world. Itciai, Puana, and Kiberoh appeared with her. There was nothing then. Nothing had been created. Kuma was made pregnant. She wanted to be impregnated in the thumb but Puana told her that too much progeny would be produced that way. So she was made pregnant in the ordinary way. Hatchawa was born. Puana created the land; Itciai the water in the rivers. Hatchawa was very small, but soon grew to a very large size. Kuma and Puana took care of his education, though Puana took more care of him. Puana made a bow and arrow for him and told him to hunt and fish. Hatchawa found a hole in the ground one day and looked into it. He saw many people. He went back to his grandparents to ask them to get some of the people out. Kuma did not want to let the people come out, but Hatchawa insisted on it. Puana made a thin rope and hook and dropped it into the hole. The people came out; just as many men as women. Finally a pregnant woman tried to come out and she broke the thin rope in getting out. That is the reason there are few people.

***

The world was dark and cold. There was no fire. Puana had made the earth and everything on it, and Itciai had created the water. Hatchawa took a live jagupa (fish) and threw it into the fire that was kept burning in the center of Kuma-land, a high circular pasture. The little fish struggled and knocked coals all about, and the people ran away in all directions with the coals. One part of these people were the Yaruros. Then Kuma wanted to give the horse to them, but the Pumeh (Yaruros) were afraid to mount it.

Of every plant in Kuma land there exists (or existed) a gigantic type, so big that an ax can't cut it. Of every animal there exists a gigantic representative.

***

India Rosa is the same as big Kuma. This Kuma lives in her city in the east. She is either the wife or sister of the sun. She is the younger sister of the other Kuma. She taught the women to make pottery and weave basketry in the same way as Puana taught the men. Itciai and the other Kuma look after everything.

***

At first there was nothing. The snake, who came first, created the world and everything in it, including the water courses, but did not create the water itself. The jaguar, the brother of the snake, created the water. The people of India Rosa were the first to people the land. After them, the other people were created. India Rosa came from the east. The Guahibos were created last. That is the reason that they live in the bush.

***

Horses and cattle were given first to the Yaruros. However, they were so large that the Yaruros were afraid to mount them. The Racionales were not afraid, and so they were given the horse.

***

The sun travels in a boat from the east. It goes to a town at night. The stars are his children and they go out from the town at night. The moon, who is a sister of the sun, also travels in a boat.

***

A woman who came from the east went to live with the sun at his village in the west. She taught women how to do everything that women do. The sun taught the men. The sun and India Rosa are married, and probably were the first people from whom everyone has sprung. But the sun and India Rosa came out of the ground. They had children. Everything was dark at that time. The children dispersed in all directions. They became the different peoples of the world. Then everything was covered with water. Horses were given to the people but they were afraid and would not ride them. But a white man sick with smallpox rode the horse, and then the horse was given to his people. He asked the Yaruros to kill him and they did. Then his people killed the Yaruros.

***

India Rosa came first. She gave birth to a son and a daughter. The son impregnated his sister, who gave birth to all humanity. India Rosa went west, the daughter went east. The son is the sun. The moon is the daughter. The snake came afterwards, and the jaguar created the water.

***

Kuma was first. God appeared. Had two children, brother and sister, and they married. There were no human beings at that time. One day Kuma said, "Let us have some people." So God went out to see about it. He found a man in a hole. He went back to Kuma, consulted with her, and went back to the man with a hook and a rope. A pregnant woman wanted to be the first to come out of the hole, but she was left to the last. Many people were brought out. The last to be brought out was the pregnant woman, and then the rope broke. The world was dark and cold. So God made a fire. A fish appeared and scattered it, so that each person could take a little of the fire. That is why all people have fire today. The people married among themselves. One of the woman descendants of India Rosa married a man of the new race and from them sprang the Yaruros. This was welcomed because the father of the girl said, "Here, a son-in-law will take care of me now!" Then the Yaruros lived. The shaman had a nephew and a son. The nephew fell in love with his own sister and married—he was changed into a jaguar and she into a snake. If it had not been for this there would not have been any snakes and jaguars. Human beings should not marry their own sisters. It was ordered by Kuma. Animals are different.

Then one man found a tree with all the fruits on it. He did not tell the others. A white man appeared on horseback. Said he would come back in eight days.

He came back in a boat. Scattered seeds everywhere. Thus he changed the country. Before it was all open savanna, but now forests and agricultural products grew.

***

India Rosa taught the women. God taught the men. God wanted to give the horse to the Yaruros, but they were afraid to mount, so he gave it to the Racionales instead.

***

A central theme in these myth fragments is the explanation of the position of the Yaruro in relation to white people; the Spanish explorers and their descendants in Venezuela. It is said that the Indians were afraid to ride horses so they were given to white people and that seed for agriculture fell into the land of the whites rather than into those of the native peoples. Another important factor is the presence of Kuma (India Rosa), the female goddess-shaman-creator, who, as a culture hero, teaches the people and thus reinforces mythically the matrilineal culture of the Yaruro.

[All but first myth reprinted from Vincenzo Petrullo, "The Yaruros of the Capanaparo River, Venezuela," U.S. Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin 123 (Anthropological Papers, Number II), Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1939, 238–241.]

See Also: Animals in Creation, Culture Heroes in Creation, **Emergence Creation**, Etiological Creation Myths, **Ex Nihilo Creation**, Goddess as Creator, Incest in Creation, Sexual Impulse in Creation, Shamanism and Creation, Sun in Creation.

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YOKUT

Each of the branches of the Yokut tribe of central California has a particular version of a creation myth. These myths are earth-diver myths and most tell aspects of the Coyote cycle.

***

The Truhohi Yokut myth says that in the beginning the only land was a mountain in the south rising above the expanse of water that covered the earth. Eagle was the chief then. The people came to him asking for earth on which to live. Eagle was at a loss as to what to do, but Coyote was not; he said Magpie would know what to do. When asked, Magpie said that earth could be obtained from "right below us."

The ducks all died trying to get mud from the depths. Only Mudhen was left, and he dove and was gone for a long time before returning dead. In his nails, beak, ears, and nose, however, were bits of mud. The people made land out of chiyu seeds and this mud.

Eagle sent Wolf to make mountain ranges, and he did. Coyote disobeyed Eagle, however, and walked on them before they were dry, and that is why

the mountains—especially the Sierra Nevada—are so jagged. Prairie Falcon and Raven were also sent to make mountains, and they argued about whose were higher. When everything had dried, Eagle and Coyote sent the people, who were still animals, to the different places, and soon they turned into human people.

Then only Coyote and Eagle were left in the original place. Eagle decided to go up to the heavens, and Coyote said he would do the same. Eagle ordered Coyote to stay behind to watch over things, but Coyote managed to go with Eagle anyway, even though he had no wings.

***

The Gashowu Yokuts claim that Prairie Falcon and Raven were the primary creators—they made the earth when there was only water everywhere. It was the duck, K'uik'ui, who managed to get sand from under the primordial waters. Prairie Falcon mixed tobacco with the bits of sand. He gave half of the mixture to Raven, and then they went in opposite directions, sprinkling the creative sand in the water to make land. Raven made better mountains, and later Prairie Falcon altered them to suit himself. It was he, after all, who had first thought of creation.

***

Among the Wukchamni Yokuts, Eagle and Coyote are the principle figures, as in the Truhohi myth. Turtle comes into this story also. It was he the creators sent to dive. He came back with a bit of sand in his nails, and out of this, Eagle and Coyote made our Earth. They also made six men and six women. These they sent out as couples to populate the earth.

Later Eagle sent Coyote to see what the people were doing. It seems they were eating up the earth, so Eagle sent the dove to find something better to eat. All of the world's agriculture began with a tiny grain of meal the dove found and Eagle and Coyote planted.

***

A Yauelmani Yokut myth reports that in the beginning there was water covering the earth. Then somehow a stick or tree grew up out of the water and headed towards the sky. At the top of the tree was a nest. In the nest were Eagle—the chief—and Wolf, Coyote, Panther, Falcon, Hawk (called po'yon), and Condor. From the nest they could only see water everywhere, and Eagle decided that he wanted to make Earth. So he called k'uik'ui, the little duck, and ordered him to dive into the water to bring up dirt to begin things. The duck tried hard but could not get to the bottom of the waters and it died trying. A larger duck was sent, and he did reach the bottom but died there and then floated up to the surface. Eagle and his companions noticed that there was a tiny bit of earth on one of the duck's feet. Eagle immediately took it and mixed it with some seeds and water and so made a kind of dough. He put the dough into the water and watched it rise and spread out in every direction. That evening Eagle told his companions to take some of the new earth and then they all got back into their nest for the night. Early the next day Eagle instructed

Wolf to shout, and the wolf did just that. But the earth disappeared. Never mind, said Eagle, we'll make a new batch. That they could do because they had taken bits of earth into the nest. So they made a new batch of Eagle's mixture, and early the next morning Eagle told Wolf to shout three times. When Wolf shouted three times the earth experienced an earthquake but remained whole. Now Coyote wanted to shout, too, and when he did the earth hardly shook at all. Since the earth was now stable, Eagle decided that the group should move out of their nest onto it. Very near to their tree there was a lake, and they settled next to it.

***

The most noticeable aspect of these myths is the predominance of animals. Presumably, each has a totem importance as originators of the people of various clans within the given communities.

See Also: Animals in Creation, Clay-based Creation, Coyote in Creation, **Earth-Diver Creation**, Primordial Waters in Creation, Raven in Creation, Trickster in Creation.

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YOLUGU

The Dhuwa group of the Yolugu (Yongu), an Aboriginal tribe of Northeastern Arnhemland in Australia, tell the story of creation in a song cycle about the Djanggawul, two sisters and a brother, who traveled across the land in what is known as Dreamtime. The Djanggawul cult is one of the most popular in Arnhemland.

***

In the beginning everything in nature existed except for humans. The prehuman ancestors of humans did exist, and these were called the Djanggawul. They created ex nihilo by way of the aborigine Dreaming. They possessed sacred thoughts as well as magical objects they carried in a bark canoe to the various parts of the country they wished to populate. There were three of these beings—Djanggawul himself and his two sisters, Bildjiwraroiju and Miralaidj. Djanggawul had a very long uncircumcised penis decorated with notches. The sisters had long clitorises. The sex organs of all three dragged along the ground leaving sacred markings.

Wherever the ancestors beached their canoe they left children made by the brother and the older sister, and later the younger sister as well. They conceived the children in the normal way, but it was necessary for Djanggawul to lift the long clitorises of his mates to do so. Wherever they stopped they also left dreamings in the form of objects, sacred stories, and ceremonial traditions. Their sacred sex organs were central to the ceremonies and were represented by decorated poles.

Eventually the Djanggawul came to Jelangbara, the holy destination of their journey and the center to this day of their cult in northeastern Arnhem Land. They made camp in what is now a sacred

waterhole made by the Djanggawul when they inserted a sacred pole into the ground. Today a spring flows from the hole. Some say that when they got to Arnhem Bay they instituted the practice of circumcision. In any case, wherever they went they established their cult and left children who would later act together as husbands and wives, and so it was that the human beings of that area came to be.

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Incest in the early stages of creation is a ubiquitous theme among the Australian aborigines and many other cultures. It exists, for instance, in the creation myths of the Vedas in India. Some say that to remove some of their cumbersome genital equipment Djanggawul and his sisters instituted the tradition of circumcision. (See Australian Aborigine creations)

Another creation myth from Arnhemland is a familiar animistic myth of a world parent as the source of creation.

***

Kunapipi is the mother goddess who existed before all things and whose body is the basis of earth itself. Her body—Earth—contains the secret caves in which her followers worship. It was Kunapipi who, long ago in the dreaming time, brought the first ancestors to the land and, acting as a culture hero, taught them the song lines of the dreamtime songs, the lines they could follow to the sacred places of her body. Once in a lifetime, each of her worshippers goes



Aboriginal boy Jazmin being painted for his important initiation and circumcism ceremony at Yathalamarra, Arnhem Land. This is the most important ceremony in a man's life and introduces him to his clan's dreaming stories. (© Penny Tweedie/Corbis)

to one of the sacred places and swings a bullroarer until Kunapipi sings and thus introduces the initiate to his or her twin soul, a soul that resides always with the goddess and at the worshipper's death will call its twin back to Kunapipi.

***

This myth differs from others like it in that no dismemberment or sacrifice of the world parent takes place.

See Also: Ancestors in Creation, Animistic Creation, Culture Heroes in Creation, Dreaming as Creation, Etiological Creation Myths, **Ex Nihilo Creation**, Goddess as Creator, Incest in Creation, Sexual Impulse in Creation, Thought-based Creation, **World Parent Creation**.

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YORUBA

The ancient tribe known as Yoruba live mostly in what is now Nigeria. Their creator is Olurun or Olodumare. Sometimes he is assisted by the lesser god, Obatala (Orishanla) in a creation that has earth-diver characteristics.

***

It is said that in the beginning water was everywhere and Olurun, the supreme being, sent Obatala, or Orishanla, down to create some land from the chaos. Obatala went down on a chain and took a shell with some earth, some iron, and a rooster (some say a pigeon hen) in it. He put the iron in the waters, the earth on top of the iron, and the cock on top of the earth. The cock's scratching spread the land about, and when it was ready, some other lesser gods came down to live there with Obatala. Chameleon came first to see that it was dry enough. When it was, Olurun named the earth Ife, meaning wide.

Orishanla created humans out of earth and got Olurun to blow life into them. Then one day he got drunk and by mistake started making cripples, who are now sacred to him. Some say that Orishanla was jealous of Olurun and wanted to give humans life by himself, but Olurun put him to sleep while he was working so he saw nothing. They say, however, it is Orishanla who shapes babies in their mothers' wombs.

***

A religion practiced by many Yoruba, a religion that was transported to America during the slavery period, is known as Aborisha. Aborisha is made up of followers of Orisha, a manifestation of Olurun. The name Orisha derives from the Ori. Each persona has Ori, a soul-like personal spirit or ultimate Self prayed to by the followers of Orisha.

See Also: Animals in Creation, Creation from **Chaos**, **Earth-Diver Creation**, Primordial Waters in Creation, Two Creators Motif.

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Shrine figures with the elongated hairstyle typical of the Yoruba orisha Eshu, the messenger and carrier of sacrifices to the other gods. (Werner Forman / Art Resource, NY)

YUCHI (TSOYAHA)

The Yuchi were deported to Oklahoma from the South along with the "Five Civilized Tribes"—the Cherokee, Chichasaw, Choctaw, Creek, and Seminole. This earth-diver myth was passed on from the Yuchis to the Creeks and now belongs to both tribes.

***

In the beginning water was everywhere. Crawfish dove down to the bottom to find mud. He stirred some up and took it away, but the mud people down below were cross. "Who is bothering our mud?" they cried. Crawfish, however, moved so fast and stirred up so much mud that the mud people could never catch him. He brought up more and more land.

By flapping his great wings over the land, Buzzard stirred up mountains, made valleys, and dried things out.

Next Yohah, the star, gave light to the land. It was not light enough, however, so Moon added his light. Finally, the Great Mother (the sun), gave her light. She moved across the sky each day, and one day a drop of her blood fell to the earth and gave birth to the first Yuchis (Uchees).

The Yuchis were bothered by a great serpent. They cut off its head but it

grew back. When they cut off its head again, they put it at the top of a tree; it killed the tree, however, and found its body again. Only when they put the severed head on the cedar tree did the monster die. This ceremony of the head and the cedar tree is the basis of Yuchi medicine.

The people acquired fire and language, and they lived happily together. The Yuchi are the Tsohaya, the People of the Sun, and they place a picture of the sun over each of their dwellings.

***

This earth-diver type story has remnants of a matrilineal point of view, since the sun is female and the serpent—always associated with the Great Goddess in ancient times—plays a significant role.

See Also: Animals in Creation, Creek (Muskogee), **Earth-Diver Creation**, Primordial Waters in Creation, Sun in Creation.

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YUKI

The Yuki live in Round Valley of northern California. Their creator, Taiko-mol (Solitary Walker), is an example of creation by Deus Faber, who, as a craftsman, constructs the world from chaos. In some versions of the myth, Coyote is an observer of creation.

***

In the beginning there was foam that wandered around on the surface of fog-covered waters. A voice came from the foam followed by Taiko-mol, who had eagle feathers on his head. The creator stood on the moving foam and sang as he created. In the darkness he made a rope, and he laid it out on the north-south axis. Then he walked along it, coiling it and leaving the created earth behind him as he went. He did this four times, and each time the water overwhelmed the new land. As he walked he wondered if there was a better way. Then he made four stone posts, or lilkae, and secured them in the ground in each of the four directions. He attached lines to these and stretched them out across the world as a plan. Finally he spoke the Word and the earth was born. Then the creator secured the new world from the waters by lining it with whale hide. He shook the earth to see that it was indeed secure—this was the first earthquake. Earthquakes since then are Taiko-mol retesting his work.

***

The construction of traditional Yuki dwellings was, in all likelihood, based on the creation of the world described above. Based on the four directions, the construction conveys a sense of an orderly world provided by the creator.

See Also: Coyote in Creation, **Creation from Chaos**, Deus Faber Creation, Four Directions in Creation, Hopi, Irish, Word-based Creation.

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YUMA (K-WICHHNA)

The Native American Yuma of western Arizona are Yuman speakers of the Hokan family. They have traditionally been village-oriented agriculturalists. The Yuma tell an emergence creation story that stresses the natural and original struggle between good and evil in creation.

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At first there was only water and emptiness. Then mist from the waters became sky. Then the Creator, who lived without form deep in the maternal waters, was born of those waters as the twins, Kokomaht, the good one, and Bakotahl, the evil one. As he came up through the waters, Kokomaht kept his eyes closed. Before he came out, Bakotahl cried out to his brother to ask whether he had opened or closed his eyes during the passage. The good twin knew the evil nature of his other half, so he lied and said his eyes had been open. So Bakotahl opened his eyes as he came through and was blinded, as Kokomaht had known he would be. This is why he is named Bakotahl, or Blind One.

Kokomaht set about making the four directions, taking four steps on the water in each direction and pointing and announcing the names: north, south, east, west. Now Kokomaht said he would make the earth, but Bakotahl doubted his twin's power. "Let me try first," he said. "No," said Kokomaht, and he stirred up the waters so much that they brought up land. Kokomaht sat on the land.

Bakotahl was angry at his twin, but sat down next to him. Secretly he made a little human figure out of mud, but it was imperfect, to say the least. Kokomaht himself decided to make a new being, and he made a perfect man, who got up and walked. Then he made a perfect woman.

Bakotahl continued his imperfect work and told his twin that what he had made were people. Kokomaht pointed out the imperfections of his brother's work—no hands, no feet. Bakotahl was so angry that he dove back into the depths and sent up storms, which Kokomaht stomped out, but not before sickness slipped into the world.

The first man and woman made by Kokomaht were the Yuma ancestors. Kokomaht went on to make the ancestors of other tribes as well—the Dieguenos, Apaches, Pimas, and others. He made 24 pairs of humans before he finally made white people.

Kokomaht, now, in effect, a culture hero, taught the Yumas how to live, especially how to have children. He made a son himself out of the void, without a woman. This boy was Komashtam'ho, and he taught the people how to make children by joining together, male and female.

Kokomaht sensed that it was too dark in the world, so he made the stars and the moon. Then he announced that he had done what he could and that his son would continue his work.

It was Frog who was jealous of Kokomaht and decided to kill him. Kokomaht knew what his people thought, however,

so he knew Frog's intentions. He decided that death must be a part of creation and that he would use himself to begin it. He allowed Frog to murder him by sucking out his breath. Then he lay down to die. He called the people to gather around him; only the white man stayed away, pouting over his washed-out looks and anxious to grab whatever he could grab. To quiet the white man, Komashtam'ho made him a horse out of sticks. In his final talk with the people, Kokomaht taught them about dying. Then he died himself.

Komashtam'ho continued with creation. First he made the sun and then wood. With the wood he made a funeral pyre for his father. He sent Coyote to get a spark from the sun, but as soon as Coyote was gone, the good twin made fire with sticks and lit the pyre. As the body was burning, Coyote stole its heart. For this theft, he was condemned to be a wild man and a thief.

Komashtam'ho explained to the people about death and the afterlife. In the world after, the people would be strong and happy and would be with those who had gone before them. Komashtam'ho chose the man Marhokuvek to assist him in his continuing creation. Marhokuvek told the people to cut their hair in mourning for the creator, but when he saw how silly the animals looked in their shaved form—animals had once looked the same as the previously hairy humans—he gave them back their hair, which they still have now.

Komashtam'ho sent a flood to rid the world of some of the wilder animals, but good animals and humans died too. Marhokuvek pleaded for mercy, and Komashtam'ho sent a fire to dry up the water. This is why we have deserts in Yuma country.

Then, after teaching more about death and after creating the Colorado River, mountains, and many other things, Komashtam'ho turned himself into four eagles to watch over the people.

As for Bakotahl, he is still under the earth causing trouble for the people above. Bad things come from him, as good things come from Kokomaht.

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Many creation myths stress the existence of good and evil in the world. What makes this myth extraordinary is the suggestion that the creator, who—also unusually—was born of the maternal waters, contained both good and evil within himself. At his birth he literally became the twins—one good, one evil.

See Also: Ancestors in Creation, Animals in Creation, Clay-based Creation, Coyote in Creation, Culture Heroes in Creation, Death Origin in Creation, Duality in Creation, **Emergence Creation**, Etiological Creation Myths, Fall from Grace in Creation, Flood in Creation Myths, Four Directions in Creation, Imperfect or Accidental Creation, Sexual Impulse in Creation, Trickster in Creation, Twins in Creation, Word-based Creation.

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YURUCARE

The Yurucare (Yurujare) live in the Bolivian lowlands of South America. They have traditionally held that the demon Aymasune brought fire down from the

skies and burned up everything, including the human race.

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The Demon Aymasune sent down a great fire storm to destroy humanity. Only one man was saved from the fire storm; he hid in a cave, holding out a stick at regular intervals to see if the fire had stopped. On the third try the stick was cool, and after four more days the man came out to see the blackened world and to begin a new life.

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Obviously this is a fire version of the Great Flood. It is of interest that it is not the supreme being who causes the end of the world but a demon.

See Also: Devil in Creation, Fall from Grace in Creation, Flood in Creation Myths.

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ZAPOTEC

The Zapotec people of the Valley of Oaxaca in southern Mexico are the descendants of the builders of the great city of Monte Alban, the first of the famous cities of pre-Columbia Mesoamerica . . . The Zapotec had cultural contacts with the Toltec, Maya and other Mesoamerican peoples and eventually with the Mixtec especially, who displaced them at Monte Alban. We have only fragments of the Zapotec creation myth, collected by the Spanish missionary, Juan de Cordova.

***

According to the Zapotec tradition there was a creator who existed before creation. This creator made the work and imbued everything in it with *pee* (Mixtec *Yni*) or the life force. Male and female manifestations of this creator made humans and animals separately. Cozaana, the sun god, created the animals, and Huichaana, the goddess of water, created the people and the fishes.

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What stands out in this myth is the animistic element—the idea that the creator has breathed the life force into everything that lives.

See Also: Animistic Creation, **Ex nihilo Creation**, Goddess as Creator, Mixtec, Sun in Creation.

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ZIA

The Zia Pueblo is one of the seven Keres-speaking communities of the Rio Grande area north and west of today's city of Albuquerque, New Mexico. The Zia creation myth is an emergence story that resembles that of fellow Keresan people such as the Laguna and Acoma.

The main deity is Tsityostinako or Prophesying Woman, who, since she is sometimes said to be a spider, is probably related to Spider Woman.

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In the beginning Prophesying Woman lived alone with Utctsiti and Naotsiti, her

two daughters. At that time there was a lot of fog and four worlds: the yellow one at the bottom, the blue one next, followed by the red one, and the white one on top. Tsityostinako and her daughters were still at the bottom.

The daughters used a magic blanket, a manta, to create things. They sat on the floor with the manta open in front of them and a magic cane on it, and they created. Prophesying Woman was invisible but with them, giving them ideas. They sang to help the creation along and checked regularly under the manta to see what was going on there. Later, when the people were created, they made their way up through the various worlds.

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As in the case of the Acoma and Laguna myths, the role of women in the creation is crucial and reflects the high status of women in the societies in question.

See Also: Acoma (Aa'ku), **Emergence Creation**, Goddess as Creator, Laguna (Kawaik), Twins in Creation.

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ZOROASTRIAN

Founded by the historical Zarathustra, or Zoroaster, who was born in the sixth century B.C.E. in Persia (present day Iran), Zoroastrianism is a religion related to older Persian traditions, especially Mithraism, the cult of the Indo-Iranian sun god Mithra. In its emphasis on the great dualities of light and dark (good and evil), Zoroastrianism influenced Christianity. Had Xerxes and his Persian navy defeated the Greeks in the great naval battle of 480 B.C.E., Zoroastrianism, rather than Christianity, might well be the dominant religion of the Western world today.

The Avesta, written in the ancient and difficult Avestan language, is the sacred book of Zoroastrianism. Tradition has it that Zoroaster composed the text himself, but it was not completed in the form in which we have it now until some two hundred years after the prophet's death.

Zoroastrianism stresses the necessity of joining with the good forces of nature. Ahura Mazda is the high god, the omnipotent and omniscient creator. Against him stands Angra Mainyu, the force of evil. Earth is holy for the Zoroastrians, and righteousness is the duty of the believer.

Several stories of creation exist in the Persian Iranian tradition.

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One story tells how Yima the Primal human, king of the Golden Age, and later a solar deity, pierced the earth with a golden arrow, making it pregnant. Yima, who resembles the Indian Vedic god Yama, had been created by the sun god Vivahant, a servant of Ahura Mazda. In the *Avesta*, we are told that in the beginning there was only Light—an essential purity. In the Light was the Word and the power of Nature. It was the creator, usually seen as Ahura Mazda himself, who joined together the Word and Nature to make the



Reconstruction of Zoroaster by D. F. Karaka. Recognized by experts as the most authentic image of Zoroaster. (© Bettmann/CORBIS)

world. When the world had become overwhelmed by the constant multiplication of its all immortal beings, Ahura Mazda decided that the earth must be enlarged and a new beginning made. He warned the faithful king Yima that a great flood was coming to cleanse the world and that Yima had to protect himself and two of each species in his castle on top of the highest mountain. The deluge arrived, and the world, except for Yima's castle and its inhabitants, was destroyed. When the waters receded, Yima opened his doors and the world was inhabited again.

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According to the 12th century text, the *Bundahishn*, in the beginning only the essential duality existed: the good Ahura Mazda and the evil Angra Mainyu. At first Ahura Mazda created a spiritual world rather than a physical one in order to foil the evil intention of his adversary. Only 3000 years later did he create the tangible world (*getig*), a perfect place with a perfect beast and a perfect human, Gayomart. Instinctively, the evil Angra Mainyu reacted against this perfection. Breaking through the great cosmic shell that encompassed the world and its cosmic sea, he caused so much vibration that the sun began to rotate rather than to stand still, causing day and night, and mountains and valleys were formed. And, as in Genesis, the interference of evil in the stillness and perfection of original creation led to death, work, and pain for humans.

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It is interesting to note, then, that Angra Mainyu, like many trickster and evil figures, of other creation myths—many, for instance, in Central Asia and Native North America—contributes to the creative process. It is also important to note that in the Zoroastrian myth there is the understanding that creation contains the means to defeat Angra Mainyu's evil. When the first beast and the first human died, they released sperm from which more life emerged, instituting a process by which death could always be overcome. Thus the Zoroastrian myth teaches that people must always support the goodness of creation by farming the land and creating children.

In his reform of the old Mazdian religion, Zoroaster, in theory, did away with

mythology. The early Aryan idea of a pantheon of amoral immortals was discarded in favor of the essential duality that lay at the source of existence. The choice for humanity and for individuals was between the two sides of the duality. In about 350 C.E., an official analysis of the Avesta was compiled. What follows is a description of creation from that work.

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The Creator made the world in his perfect light in this way. Called the Endless Form, the creation had two sides. It was made up of the ideal creation and the material creation. The ideal creation was the place of the Spirit of the Power of the Word. The material creation was the place of the Spirit of the Power of Nature. The spiritually perfect ideal creation produced the gods of the Word, each of whom performed a function necessary to that creation. And in the material creation the Creator brought together the two spirits—of the Power of the Word and of the Power of Nature.

This is how it happened. First, mass was made to unite with the Spirit of the Word to become firmament. In the firmament were the heavenly bodies, which control material creation. Heat and moisture combined with the spiritual Word, producing the seeds of becoming, of potentiality. Eventually animals and humans took shape from the power of becoming.

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In the fifth century B.C.E., the concept of Ahura Mazda as the creator, the combined power of the two spirits of the original creation, developed.

Ahura Mazda was sometimes called Ohrmazd, and his opposite, Angra Mainyu, was Ahriman. It was written that Ohrmazd created Finite Time (Zurvan) from Infinite Time and placed the stars in it to measure its passing. Ahriman was weak during the first 3,000 years of the 12,000 years of Finite Time, but after the next 3,000 years, during which the world was made and Adam and Eve were created, Ahriman's powers polluted creation and Ahriman had to be contained in Hell.

Much of the Christian concept of duality in nature—personified, for instance, in the temptation of Jesus by Satan—is shared by Christianity and Zoroastrianism.

See Also: **Creation from Chaos**, Duality in Creation, Sun in Creation.

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ZULU

According to Zulu tradition, the tribe originated in the Congo basin and migrated to the territory they now hold in the Republic of South Africa. The Zulu nation reached its zenith under the early 19th century military and cultural leadership of King Shaka. The Zulu population is now approximately three million.

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Unkulunkulu, the Ancient One, is the Zulu creator. Nobody knows where he is now; he came originally—that is, he broke off—from some reeds, which play the role more usually played by a cosmic egg. Some say that he was the reeds, because the word for them, *Uthlanga,* also means "source." It was he who broke off the people from the reeds and then the cattle and other peoples. He also broke off medicine men and dreams. He was really the first man and the progenitor of other men.

Unkulunkulu created everything that is—mountains, cattle, streams, snakes. He taught the Zulu how to hunt, how to make fire with sticks, and how to eat corn. He named the animals for them.

The people say that Unkulunkulu is in everything; Unkulunkulu is the corn, the tree, the water. Some say that a woman followed him out of the original reeds, then a cow and a bull, then the other pairs of animals. Whatever the story, Unkulunkulu was the first man and there was nothing before him; yet he broke off from the source.

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Unusual here is the tradition that Unkulunkulu is at once creator, first human, and culture hero as well as being the source of the spirit that animates all creation. In typical African creation myth fashion, he no longer plays a role in the affairs of the world.

See Also: Animals in Creation, Animistic Creation, Cosmic Egg in Creation, **Creation from Chaos**, Culture Heroes in Creation, Deus Otiosus or Absconditus in Creation, **World Parent Creation**.

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ZUNI

The Zuni people live in western New Mexico. They, like the Hopi, consider themselves to be descendants of the ancient cliff-dwelling Anasazi. The Zuni Pueblo is known for the people's religious ceremonies and fine jewelry, pottery and other arts. Zuni ceremonies and myths reflect the intensity and complexity of their culture. The creation myth is no exception. Like the creation stories of the other pueblos, it is an emergence myth and also an example of ex nihilo creation.

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Awonawilona is the creator of all that is. He existed before anything else in the great dark emptiness of the beginnings. He conceived himself by thought; as the container of all things, he created himself as himself and as the sun that brought people light, warmth, and water.

Out of himself Awonawilona made the seed with which he impregnated the primeval waters with Awitelin Tsita (Earth Mother) and Apoyan Ta'chu (Sky Father). Sky Father and Earth Mother came together and engendered the creatures of our world. Then Earth Mother cast off Sky Father and sank in comfort part way into the waters.

Sky Father and Earth Mother can take many forms; like thoughts, they can transform themselves at will, the way dancers can in the ceremonies. So

it is that they could speak to each other as humans and see things in human terms.

Earth Mother held up a great bowl of water and told Sky Father the bowl was herself and that along its rim the people would live. She said she was many bowls for many peoples, many countries. The people, she said, would take nourishment from her as from the water of the bowl. Earth Mother spat into the bowl and stirred it, causing land to build up on the edges. Sky Father sent his cold breath down, which made clouds and mist on the land. The children of earth would seek shelter in her lap, said Earth Mother. The Earth Mother is warm, say the people, and the Sky Father is cold. So it is with women and men.

Sky Father, too, gives to humans. He passed his hand over the bowl and up sprang the fruits of the earth.

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The Zunis also talk of the beginnings from a less mystical and less cosmic point of view. They tell how the people actually came to be in Zuni.

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The Fourth World was dark, they say, and crowded. The people constantly got in each other's way. In the world there was the sun and the earth. The Father looked down on the beautiful Mother and pitied the people crowded in the darkness below her. He sent his rays down to Earth in such a way as to encourage his two sons, Elder Brother and Younger Brother, to go in search of the people. "Let's go find the people, so they can come up here and see our father," said Younger Brother.

The brothers went southwest until they came to the entrance to the below. It was dim in the First World, dark in the Second World, very dark in the Third World, and pitch black in the Fourth World, where the people were. The people sensed that strangers were among them; they touched the children of the Sun in the darkness.

"Come with us and we will take you to the Sun," the brothers said, "but we must show you how."

So Younger Brother went north and planted pine seeds, turned around while a pine tree grew, and took a branch to the people. Then he did the same with the spruce in the west, the silver spruce in the south, and the aspen in the east.

The sons of the Sun built a prayer stick ladder of the pine tree from the north for the people to use on their climb to the third world. They stayed there for some time—some say four days, some say four years. The sons then made a prayer stick ladder out of the western spruce and the people climbed to the second world. The dim light there almost blinded them. They stayed there for a while; then the sons made a prayer stick ladder from the silver spruce of the south and the people climbed to the first world, where they had to cover their eyes in the dawn-like light. When they could see, the people were horrified by the way they looked; they were dirty and slimy and they had tails, no mouths, and webbed feet. They remained in the first world for four days (or four years).

Finally, the sons of the Sun made a prayer stick ladder out of the aspen tree

of the east, and, accompanied by thunder, the people climbed out into our world. The brightness brought tears of pain to their eyes, but Younger Brother forced them to look directly at the Father Sun. The tears of pain flowed, and from these tears came flowers.

"Now you are in the world," said the sons.

The people rested at the emergence spot for four days (or four years) before moving on to Awico, where the sons taught the people how to grow food. The people liked the way the corn smelled, but they had no mouths, so the brothers cut mouths into them while they slept. Later they cut the webs between the people's fingers and outlets in their bottoms. Now the people could handle the food, eat it, and give off waste.

One night the brothers removed the tails and horns from the people. Some woke up and asked to keep their tails; these became monkeys. Most of the people were pleased with the way they looked; they looked like us.

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The Zuni myth is one that stresses balance—balance between the masculine and the feminine; the earth and the sky in creation. It's emergence aspect relates it to the myths of neighbors of the southwest region of the United States, particularly the myth of the Pimans, in which an equally Christ-like Elder Brother is a resurrected god who retrieves the people from the pre-emergence darkness. The influence of Christianity is probable in both versions of Elder brother.

See Also: Acoma (Aa'ku), Animals in Creation, **Emergence Creation**, **Ex Nihilo Creation**, Hopi, Laguna (Kawaik), Pima (Akimal O'odham), Primordial Waters in Creation, Separation of Heaven and Earth in Creation, Sexual Impulse in Creation, Sun in Creation, Thought-based Creation, **World Parent Creation**.

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Part III

Comparative Aspects

The entries in this section consider some of the themes and motifs that arise when creation myths from around the world are compared. This is not to say that each theme or motif exists in all creation myths; it is merely to say that these are frequently present elements, common patterns that emerge when we consider creation myths as a subject. The myths referred to in this section may all be found in the alphabetically arranged collection of myths in Part II.

AGES OF CREATION

Many cultures see creation as a process involving several stages or historical ages. Often the stages relate to the development of humankind. The Greek creation story told by Hesiod in his *Theogony* begins with the creation of the universe by Gaia and Ouranos (Earth and Sky). But this first couple is overpowered by the Titan Kronos. During the reign of Kronos, human beings experience the Golden Age, a period during which they live in a paradisiacal world in peace and harmony with the gods. The next age coincides with the overthrow of Kronos and a war in Heaven that results in the ascendancy of Zeus and his Olympians. This was the Silver Age, which includes the story of the flood that destroyed impious humanity. The Bronze Age followed. It was an age of brutality and war. The Heroic Age was next; an age of the great epic heroes. It was followed by Hesiod's age, the Iron Age, characterized by toil and hardship and the usual human depravities.

Among the Native North Americans who accept the tradition of the emergence creation, the human being develops in stages as it progresses upward from one world to the other. The creation of the Navajo people begins in an underground first world, where they are quarrelsome insect people whom the gods chase out of this world with a massive flood. In the Second World, the insect people interact with the Swallow people and persist in

their underdeveloped ways by sexually assaulting them. After their expulsion from the Swallow Second World they enter the Grasshopper Third World and again sexually assault their hosts. Finally forced into this world—the Fourth World, they meet the Kisani—the Pueblo people, who teach them about agriculture. In the Fourth World the gods try to teach the newly arrived people how to live properly. The human world was thus created.

The creation myth of the Toltecs of Mesoamerica is similar. Their creator made five worlds and five suns in succession. These worlds were those of earth, fire, air, water, and rock. The people of each world were destroyed because of their impiety—the fourth world was destroyed by a great flood.

In the Iroquoian earth-diver creation myth there are four ages. We begin with a heavenly paradise time in the sky. The second age involves the fall of a woman from the sky onto the back of a turtle in the primeval waters. The third age is the dive for material with which to create Earth. The fourth age is that of the actual creation of Earth. Sometimes in a fifth age there are twins who struggle with each other—good against evil—for dominance over the newly created people.

In the *Purana* texts of India creation is a constant cycle of ages—ages that are born, that flourish, and that are destroyed before another age arises. Each *kalpa* (eon) is made up of four *yugas* (ages) that take their names from various throws in a game of dice. The ages, beginning with the *Satya,* or Golden Age, mark a gradual deterioration of values and society. Our age—the age of our creation—is the *Kali* age. The Kali Age marks a low point of human activity that will lead to total destruction and submersion in the primordial waters. This destruction will be a sacrifice in preparation for the creation of a new *kalpa.*

Whether a culture sees the ages of creation as a gradual improvement or a deterioration of the human condition, the essential meaning of the theme would seem to be centered in a sense of the relationship between human development and change, whether physical or psychological, and the development of the created world as a whole. The ages of creation become a metaphor for human growth. The baby is born and gradually becomes an adult. Do we choose to emphasize growth into selfishness and evil, or growth into higher understanding? Is the innocence of childhood preferable to the experience of adulthood? From a psychological perspective, in myths such as the emergence myth with its ages of gradual creation, for example, we may find a connection between the various stages and the gradual movement of the healthy psyche from an unconscious to a fully conscious or self-aware state.

ANCESTORS IN CREATION

Stories of the original man and woman who were the ancestors of particular ethnic groups are ubiquitous. The ancestor myths are related to but essentially different from the world parent myths in which deities literally become creation through a process of dismemberment or separation (*See* World Parent Creation). Thus, the Indian *Rig Veda* primal male, Purusha, and the Chinese first man, Pangu,

can be seen as the ancestors of humanity, but ultimately their mythical role is an animistic one (*See* Animistic Creation) in which they become the universe itself.

Ancestors in creation are literally the first couple, from whose sexual union all people in the given culture originate. So people of the Jewish, Christian, and Islamic traditions look back in the mythical sense to the Adam and Eve of Genesis, whose creation is itself an important aspect of the overall creation. Adam and Eve are not world parents in the sense that Pangu and Purusha are; rather, they are the first ancestors. In a similar way, Izanami and Izanagi are the ancestors of the Japanese.

The first ancestors theme is common in African myths. The Dogon people say they are descended from an incestuous relationship between sacred twins. The Kikuyu teach that the father of the Kikuyu, Gikuyu, mated with Mumbi, who produced nine daughters. A ritual sacrifice led to the emergence from the earth of nine husbands for them, and from these unions came the nine Kikuyu clans.

In Native North American mythologies we frequently find first ancestors. The Navajo have First Man and First Woman, and the Acoma and other Pueblo people tell of the sister spirits who produced sacred twins, one of whom mated with his spirit aunt to make the first people.

In non-Hindu tribal areas of India ancestors in creation are common. In the mythology of the Garo people, the creator made the first humans, a man named Sani and a woman named Muni. Muni gave birth to Gancheng and Dujong, who in turn produced Nōrō and Mandé, the first Garo.

Ancestors are particularly important in the creation myths of the Aboriginal people of Australia. In the dreaming (*See* Dreaming as Creation) myths, the prehistoric gods of the Yolugu, Ngurunderi, and Arandan peoples walked about in the primeval world, dreaming sacred places and whole areas into existence. These dreamers are thought to be the original ancestors of the people.

The significance of the first ancestors theme is related to the significance of mythology as a whole and creation myths in particular. The human species differs from other species in that it continually wonders about the past, the present, and the future. We wonder where we came from and where we are going, and how both of those questions have to do with the present, with who we actually are. No other animal asks, "Who am I?" Myths are metaphors that make sense out of the mysteries of life. Creation myths give particular people meaning and significance as tribal groups in an otherwise confusing and perhaps random universe. Ancestors in creation satisfy our need to know—in human terms—where we came from. "Who exactly are you?" the world asks. We are "the children of Adam and Eve," or "the descendants of Izanami and Izanagi," or "the offspring of Nōrō and Mandé," we answer, and in so doing we somehow satisfy a deep need.

ANIMALS IN CREATION

The presence of animals in creation myths is common to most parts of the world. In almost all creation myths animals are created before humans and often they play a role in the continuing creation itself. The

creator in an Altaic myth takes the form of a great goose; so does his devil/man assistant. The most popular Mesoamerican god was Quetzalcoatl, the Feathered Serpent. The creator gods of Egypt were depicted with animal heads. A Native American myth of the Osage tells how humans came about from the mating of Beaver Girl and Snail Boy.

Nowhere is the role of animals in creation more important than in Native North America. Iroquoian, Siouan, and Algonquian speaking people, as well as several California tribes, have creation myths of the earth-diver type in which the creator requires primary material—*prima material*—with which to begin creation of Earth. Almost universally in earth-diver myths, animals are sent on dives into the primeval maternal waters to find the necessary material—mud, sand, or clay. The diver animals—all of whom are ordinary woodland species rather than typically noble beasts such as lions or eagles—often give their lives in their attempts. Usually one little animal succeeds, bringing back some material from the depths in its paw or under its claws. For the Anishinabe, the Assiniboine, and the Iroquoian tribes, it is the lowly muskrat. For the Cherokee it is the water beetle, for the Crow and the Miwok it is the duck, for the Huron the toad. The Yokut diver is the mud hen. The turtle is the diver hero for the Arapaho, the Bloods, and the Maidu. Often, it is the turtle who allows the new material to be placed on its back, where it grows and grows into the world appropriately known by many Indian nations as Turtle Island.

Many Native North Americans who adhere to the emergence type of creation story—people such as the Hopi and the Navajo—pay special homage to Spider Woman, who helps weave creation into existence and who, in some myths, leads the people in their various developmental stages from the lower worlds into this world.



Shell disc incised with a spider. The cross symbol on the thorax symbolized the Mississippian sacred fire. Mississippian culture-Southern cult, Arkansas. c. 1000 C.E. (Werner Forman / Art Resource, NY)

Also important in Native American creation myths are the animal/trickster/creator figures such as Nanabozho, the Great Hare, among the Algonquian speakers, Raven in Alaska, and Coyote almost everywhere. Raven steals the sun for several tribes, including the Haida and Tsimshian—and also brings them death. Coyote, too, helps to create a world that is a mixed blessing. The Achomawi say he undermined the creation of his friend Silver Fox. The Crow say he caused all the different languages and subsequent wars. The Pima say he gave bad advice to the main creator, and the Ute see him as the source of fights and wars.

The role of animals in creation is not limited to North America. Earth-diver myths in which animals play a similar role to that of the diving animals in the Native American earth-diver myths are found in Central Asia; very likely the place of origin of many Native Americans. A good example is the creation myth of the Buriats, whose creator sent a water bird to bring up dirt from the ground beneath the waters. In India's *Vishnu Purana*, the creator god, Brahma, himself becomes a great boar and dives into the depths to find the germ of earth.

In Africa, creation myths typically involve the creation of animals and humans and the sometimes difficult interaction between them that undermines the harmony of the creation itself. The creator of the Zambian Malozi becomes distraught when his newly created humans begin killing and eating their brothers, the animals. In the beginning the Yao creator of southern Africa only created animals, but the Chameleon found a tiny man and a tiny woman in his otherwise empty fish net. When the tiny people grew they began eating the animals, so the animals fled from them. Sometimes in Africa animals do not simply find the original humans; they give birth to them. The Shilluk people of Sudan have a myth in which a sacred white cow gave birth to the first human, Kola, the Shilluk ancestor.

The place of animals in creation myths points us back to a longed-for stage of life in which all beings—gods, humans, and animals—communicated and, unless corrupted by devils or tricksters, cooperated in the creative process. At that time humans and animals—as in fairy tales—could understand each other and had no need to fear each other. Also, in the case of cultures with animistic religions in which spirits are present everywhere and in everything, animals—even the humblest ones—become sacred and quite capable, for instance, of diving to the depths in a sacrificial act of creation. Finally, stories of the loss of the original innocence and the subsequent warfare between animals and humans serve to justify or explain hunting. In its most positive form, as in many Native American myths, the animal allows itself to be hunted and used as food as long as certain rituals are performed in recognition of that sacrificial generosity.

ANIMISTIC CREATION

Animistic cultures are those that experience the presence of spirits—of animation—in all things and all aspects of creation. Typically, such cultures are based in settings dominated by nature—by woods, jungles, and wilderness areas—and by the presence of wild animals. The creation myths of such cultures usually have to do with the specific manner in which spiritual or religious reality became a part of the reality of this world. Frequently the myths involve the sacrifice and/or dismemberment of a divine being, whose body then becomes the world. Animistic elements, therefore, play a significant role in many world parent creation myths where the parent is the dismembered deity.

In an Algonquin creation myth, the Great Earth Mother has a son named Glooskap, or Michabo, who, when his

mother dies, creates all the elements of nature, including animals and humans, from her body. In one of several Aztec creation myths Quetzalcoatl and his dark brother Tezcatlipoca tear apart a devouring goddess floating on the primeval waters, making one half the earth, the other the sky. Her hair becomes plant life, her eyes water, her mouth rivers, her shoulders hills and mountains. In much the same way, the Babylonian hero, Marduk, killed the monstrous goddess, Tiamat, and "divided her like a shell-fish into two parts:/He threw one half to the heavens and called it the sky . . . /he formed the firmament below." In her stomach he made a path for the sun. Marduk had another god make humans from the bones and blood of the goddess's dead companion. One myth of the Bon people of Tibet says that the body of a primordial goddess became the world. The sky came from her head, the planets from her teeth, the moon from her right eye, the sun from her left. When she opened her eyes it was day, when she closed them it was night. Her voice was thunder, her breath clouds, her tears rain. In the Finnish creation epic the bird's eggs of creation broke and became earth and sky. The moon and the stars developed from the egg whites, and the sun from the yolks. Furthermore, the footprints of the goddess on whom the eggs had been laid became pools for fish. The movement of her arms made beaches. The ancient Indian *Rig Veda* relates the story of the creative sacrifice of the primal man, Purusha. His bottom quarter became the world, his mouth became the Brahmin caste, his arms the warrior caste, his thighs the common people, and his feet the lowest of the low. From Purusha's mind came the moon, from his eye the sun, from his breath the wind, from his head the sky, from his feet the earth, from his navel the atmosphere. A Chinese creation myth is similar. Here the primal man is Pangu. When he was dying his breath became the wind and the clouds, his voice the peals of thunder, his eyes the sun and moon, his arms and legs the four directions, his blood and semen water and rivers, his muscles and veins the earth's structure, his flesh the fields and land, his hair and beard the stars, plants, and trees, his teeth and bones metal and rock.

In the Kodiak creation myth a bladder containing a primal couple—a man and a woman—appeared from the sky. The man and woman stretched the bladder until it became Earth. By pushing with their hands and feet, the couple made mountains. The man's hair became trees. The woman urinated and spit to make the oceans, lakes, rivers, and ponds. The man made fish out of wood chips cut with a knife made from the woman's teeth. Faro, the sacred twin of the African Mande people, took the form of a fish and was sacrificed. His body was cut into 60 pieces, which became the trees. The body of Ymir, the sacrificed Frost Giant of Norse mythology, was taken by the gods and turned into the earth. His blood became the seas, his bones the mountains. His teeth and jaws became rocks, stones, and pebbles, his skull the sky. The Okanagan creator, Old Man, made Earth Woman. Trees and other plants are her hair, the soil is her body, stones are her bones, and the wind is her breath. Old One also made animals out of little pieces of her body and blew on

them to give them life. The Yolugu Aborigines of Australia say that Earth itself is Kunapipi, the mother goddess, who existed from the beginning. Her worshippers keep the various caves of her body sacred. A myth from Tahiti tells how the creator made the sky out of part of the shell of the cosmic egg from which he broke out. Out of himself he made the world. Out of his spine he made a mountain range. His ribs became hillsides, his fingernails shells and scales, and his feathers became trees and plants.

All of these cultural dreams point to a remarkably constant archetypal pattern. The world is sacred because it is made from divine primordial material. The world of the animistic peoples is literally alive with the flesh of these beings. As such, the animistic world is terrifying and sacred at the same time—a place of awe and wonder, which is to say, a religious setting for human activity.

AXIS MUNDI IN CREATION

The point of many creation myths is to assert the existence of a world center, usually the sacred place of creation for the given tribe. In the case of the emergence creation type, the place of emergence is, by definition, the world center, and it can be argued that specific places described in other types of creation myths can also be considered world centers—such places as the biblical Garden of Eden or the Egyptian primal mound. In the Iroquoian earth-diver myths involving the fall of Sky Woman from the heavens, a tree in the heavens is usually uprooted, leaving a hole through which she will fall to Earth to assist in the creation process there. This tree, therefore, becomes a kind of cosmic world center. Trees are important as sources of creation for the Maasai in Africa, the Oceanic peoples of the Banks Islands and Papua New Guinea, as well as the southwestern American people of Acoma, for instance. Trees stand as central symbolic structures in the mythologies of the Efe and Ijaw peoples in Africa, as well.

A ubiquitous symbol for the world center is, in fact, the tree or other upright object, which serves as an *axis mundi* or axle of the world. It is this axle that holds the various parts of creation together and can be said to stand for the power of the creator or for the spiritual power of creation or cosmos itself, as opposed to chaos.

The Australian Aboriginal people, the Arandan, celebrate the phallic tnatantja pole that arose originally from the creator-ancestor lying in what would become a particularly sacred center. The Indian Birhor creator rested on the great lotus plant, as did the Hindu creator.

The tree that springs from the body of a culture hero or creator and focuses the lives of the people is a theme among the Luiseño tribe in California, whose tree springs from the ashes of their dying god/hero, Wiyot. The son of the Gilbert Islands creator uses his dead father's spine as an axis mundi to hold the sky above the earth. The body of Lone Man, a savior-creator, is the source of an axis mundi cedar tree of the Mandan tribe of North Dakota. Lone Man's tree calls to mind the cross of the Christian story of the crucifixion of Jesus, the cross serving as the Christian axis mundi, the center of a new creation. For Christians, that cross,



Inside view of a row of shiva temples in Pashupatinath, Kathmandu, featuring the sivalinga. (Shutterstock)

or tree, replaces the old forbidden tree of the biblical Garden of Eden.

Typically, the world tree is the object that connects the upper and lower worlds of creation. The giant linga of Shiva is an endless and infinite axis mundi between the unattainable depths and heights of creation. In Sumatra the Batak trinity of three worlds is held together by a world tree, as are the worlds of the northwestern American Salishan and Nez Perce peoples. The most famous world tree is probably Yggdrasil, which connects the various elements of the Norse creation. The Tree of Life of the Indonesian Dyaks serves the same function.

The world tree was a sacred symbol for the ancient Mesoamerican Olmec and for the Tungus of the South Pacific. The Pacific Northwest American Maidu creator placed his people under a sacred oak tree. The first people of the Southeast Asian Negritos came from seeds of fruit plucked from a world tree. And for the African Wapangwa, the world tree was the center of a dispute in which the animals wished to eat of the tree and humans wished to preserve its sacred purity. In this case the humans won but the animals remained forever resentful.

The tree is a particularly powerful psychological and religious symbol, perhaps because of its size, its strength, its deep-rootedness, its height, and its beauty. By its very existence, the isolated tree stands as a center of focus.

BIRTH AS CREATION METAPHOR

It is natural that myth-makers the world over, in their attempts to tell the story of the birth of the world, would have consciously or unconsciously reached out to the process of mammalian birth for imagery and metaphor (*See* Father Creators). As it is the female rather than the male who gives birth, it is also natural that symbols and images of the feminine play a primary role in these myths. The birth metaphor is particularly evident in the emergence creation type and the earth-diver type. It is also evident to a lesser extent in the creation from chaos and world parent creation myths.

The emergence myth typically begins in a place deep within Earth, the ultimate mother of us all. The people, not yet fully formed, exist in the womb-like darkness. In some cases a male deity has played a creative fertilizing role in an act sometime past, but the emergence of the people from the inner Earth to our world is gradual and directed—if by anyone—by

a female deity who acts as a kind of midwife in what is, in effect, a gestation and birthing process. And it is that deity—a de facto culture hero—rather than a male deity who teaches, cares for, and nourishes the people when they first arrive on the surface of Earth. The emergence myths are predominant in the Native American West.

According to the Acoma people and their fellow Keres-speaking neighbors, the Laguna in New Mexico, the beginning of things in the earth womb was directed by a personification of Mother Earth known as Tsichtinako (Thinking Woman), who some say is the same as Spider Woman. In the darkness the goddess watched over the development of two sisters to whom she gave baskets containing the seeds of everything that would exist in the upper world. These seeds came from the father. Thinking Woman helped the sisters find a way out of a hole into the upper world.

For the Hopis, farther west in northern Arizona, there were four stages—four worlds to pass through—on the way to the final emergence. That emergence, usually believed to have been directed by Spider Woman or another goddess, was through a hole represented in the Hopi *kivas*—the small chambers where secret religious ceremonies take place—by a small hole known as the *sipapu* in the center of the room. The Navajos, too, speak of the existence of several stages of emergence, emphasizing the development of the people at each stage.

The Arikara tribe tells how, after a great flood sent by the creator to destroy evil giants, a few good giants were preserved in the earth as corn seeds. Meanwhile, Corn Mother came from the heavens and led the people—the corn people—out of the earth and taught them how to live.

In all of these cases and others like them, the people undergo a process by which they are pushed or pulled into the world we know as, in effect, children of the Earth Mother.

Nowhere is the birth metaphor more evident than in the Jicarilla Apache myth, in which the people begin their existence in an underworld that is like a great swelling womb. They enter the world by an opening at the top of a mountain after the waters of the earth have broken. This myth is of great importance in the puberty ceremonies of Apache girls.

A creation myth that has emergence characteristics and is directly related to birth is that of the Assyrians of ancient Mesopotamia. The myth is expressed in the context of an actual birthing ritual. In this myth it is the great earth goddess Ninhursag (also Nintu or Mama) who creates the humans. In the myth—reflected by the ritual—the gods, led by Ninhursag, go to the temple where 14 "mother-wombs" (pregnant women in the ritual) are assembled. The goddess draws 14 figures in the clay before her and the god Ea kneels, opens his navel, and orders the mother-wombs to bring forth seven males and seven females. Then the Great Mother Womb, Ninhursag, herself forms the new beings, signifying the original creation of humans.

Earth-diver myths can also be seen in the birthing context. Here it is usually small animals who become the sperm-like divers into the maternal waters. The piece of mud or sand retrieved by the

little animal who manages to survive the dangerous dive becomes the basis for the growing Earth, which will eventually become the human home. It is a de facto cosmic egg. In many of the earth-diver myths it is a male figure, however, who supervises the diving and gestation process. In the Central Asian myths—those, for instance, of the Altaic, Birhor, Buriat, and Mongolian traditions—it is the creator himself who sends down the diver, and the diver is sometimes his devil/trickster/assistant. For the Crow, Blood, Maidu, and Mandan Native North Americans the creator is the supervisor but the divers are animals. Among many other Native Americans it is also the creator's appointed culture hero who oversees the dive—again, always undertaken by animals. For the Anishinabe it is Nanabozho, for the Arapaho it is Flat Pipe, for the Assiniboine it is the trickster Iktome, for the Miwok and Yokut it is Coyote.

In the Iroquoian and Iroquoian-influenced mythologies, as in the emergence myth, it is often a woman—a goddess—who oversees the process, a sacred midwife who, in the Iroquoian myths, falls from the heavens to undertake her role. It is this Sky Woman who nourishes the new creation. This is so of the Cherokee, the Huron, and the Wyandot as well as of the six members of the Iroquoian league: the Mohawk, the Oneida, the Onondagan, the Cayuga, the Seneca, and the Tuscarora.

Birth imagery is evident in the creation from chaos myths when a cosmic egg is present, the egg being in some sense fertilized in such a way as to become the prima material of the world. In the Vietnamese creation story the mountain spirit Au-Co produces a birth sac with 100 eggs. Among the Dogon the cosmic egg divides into cosmic birth sacs—placenta—containing the earth spirits. In a Kodiak myth a birth sac containing the first man and woman came down out of the sky.

In world parent myths the birth metaphor is present in that it is from the mother—often Earth her self, as in the case of the Greek Gaia or the Egyptian Geb, who gives birth to the elements of nature.

The power of the birth imagery comes from the fact that it is something with which humans can easily identify. It creates an analogy between the creation of the world and the creation of individual humans and thus gives us a meaningful and *natural* place in creation.

BODILY WASTE OR FLUIDS AS CREATION SOURCE

Just as birth imagery is an appropriate vehicle for the emphasizing of the feminine aspect of creation in certain cosmogonic myths, the use of bodily fluids and waste as a source of creation is rooted in a perceived analogy between the natural functions of humans and the more cosmic ones of nature. In several ex nihilo myths in particular, the use of the creator's bodily excretions in the absence of a female companion becomes an almost obvious means by which the creator fertilizes the universe to make the world. The religion scholar Mircea Eliade speaks of the omnipotent Sky God as a "fecundator" (Eliade, Patterns, 86 ff).

A creation myth of Heliopolis in ancient Egypt tells us that the creator

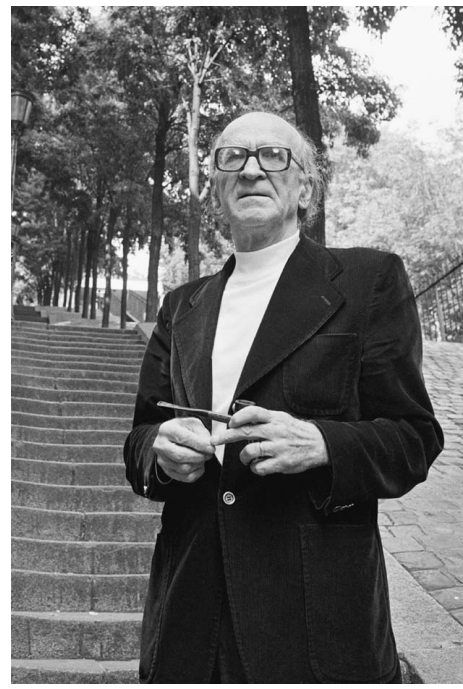
god Atum existed alone in the universe and that he created his brother and sister, Shu (air-life) and Tefnut (water/fertility) by masturbating, or, as some texts claim, by expectorating. As Atum was alone in the universe, this manner of initiating creation seems logical—more realistic, for instance, than creation by thought or word, or at least more natural. As the Atum myth developed over time, Atum, who had originally been bisexual or androgynous—the "Great He-She"—became more masculine in his depictions, and his masturbating hand became his queen.

In the Acoma myth of North America the creator found another logical way of creating from himself; he used a drop of his blood.

In the *Rig Veda* of India we are told that "The phallus of Heaven," the male force, contained the hot seed of Heaven and that some of this seed spilled onto Earth, and words and the rituals were born.

In Africa, a Boshongo myth relates the story of the creator, Bumba, in the pre-creation darkness, experiencing a stomach ache and vomiting up the sun, the moon, the stars, and the animals, including humans.

The bodily fluid theme does not, however, always involve an ex nihilo creator. In the Ceramese myth of Indonesia the heroine/goddess Hainuwele is the result of a drop of blood of the man, Ameta, mixing with sap. In a Chukchee myth of Central Asia the trickster-creator Raven, whose wife had already created humans, was challenged to create Earth. So he began to fly, and as he flew he defecated and urinated, and his droppings became the mountains, valleys, rivers, oceans, and lakes. In short, his excrement became the world. In a Kodiak myth the first woman urinated and spit to make the oceans, lakes, rivers, and ponds.



Romanian-born writer and philosopher Mircea Eliade stands on an outdoor stairway. (© Sophie Bassouls/Sygma/Corbis)

There is, of course, an element of bathroom humor in these myths—especially in those involving trickster figures such as Raven. A more serious reason for these myths can perhaps be surmised if we consider the creative pleasure that can accompany acts of ejaculation, expectoration, urination, and defecation. During babyhood, spitting and defecation especially, and sometimes urination, seem to be expressions for the child of creativity. The baby is pleased at having created something of

his very own from his own body. In terms of the myths themselves, the creator in question uses whatever means available to him or to her. The world created by the urinating first woman or the one created by the masturbating god is sacred, precisely because it is distinctly of the creator's body. There is an intimacy in this creation theme that is lacking in motifs such as creation by word or creation by thought.

CLAY-BASED CREATION

In a vast number of creation myths from all parts of the world the creator makes use of soil—usually clay—in the creative process. Even the ex nihilo creator, who begins by creating by word or thought, uses clay in the later stages of the process. So, for example, in the Hebrew myth of Genesis 2:7 in the Bible, the creator forms the first human from "the dust of the ground." In the creation from chaos myths, too, the chaotic form—the *prima materia*—to be molded is often clay. The Dogon god Amma flung a lump of clay into space, where it formed the world—a body with the north at the top, the south at the bottom and east-west arms spreading out from both like a living body The Indian Gond creator used a bit of dirt to create a crow that then seeded the earth. The Salishan Indian creator rolled out a lump of clay "like a piece of dough" to make the earth. Clay or a bit of earth of some sort as *prima materia* is essential to earth-diver myths, all of which involve diving into the primeval maternal waters to find the bit of earth's body from which the world will grow. Muskrat or some other humble animal makes the sometimes tragic journey to the depths in search of the necessary sample of earth in the Native American Huron, Cherokee Mohawk, Seneca, Onondaga, and Tuscarora myths, for instance, and out of that clump of clay the creator's representative begins the process of growing the world on the surface of the waters. The same is true of many Central Asian creation myths. The Birhor creator, for instance, sends a series of animals into the depths until finally the insignificant leech dives and swallows some of the mud from the floor of the waters, surfaces, and spits it into the creator's hand. Out of this tiny bit of mud the creator forms the world.

More often earth—as dust, mud, or especially, and more logically, as clay—is used create humans. In China the goddess Nügua molded yellow earth to make human beings. The Central Asian Altaic creator made humans out of a bit of mud he saw floating in the waters. The Hopi goddess Spider Woman turned the creator's thought of human beings into fact by singing "May the Thought live," and forming it of clay. The Efe creator in Africa made the first man out of clay covered with skin. The creator of the Malagasy people of Madagascar breathed life into his daughter's clay dolls. The Andean Jivaro goddess produced a child by breathing on dirt. When the jealous bird, Auhu, broke the clay child and the broken pieces became the world. The oldest of all known creation myths is that of the Sumerians of Mesopotamia. Their gods made humans out of clay but were drunk when they did so, leaving poor humans as a highly imperfect creation. A somewhat amusing tale of an imperfect clay creation is told by Mongolian people. It is said that the creator made humans out of clay and then

left them to dry under the protection of the dog. But when the creator's trickster/devil of a brother tempted the dog with a fur coat, the dog let down his guard, allowing the devil to spit on the new clay figures, who forever after suffered pain and disease.

That early myth makers should have chosen clay as the essential building material for world creation is not surprising since in the microcosmic creation that was the dwelling place, clay would have been a basic material. In the case of humans, too, the analogy is apt. Since the Paleolithic age *Homo sapiens* have been driven to imitate reality in the form of painting and statues. The obvious material for the latter would have been clay, so it could be presumed that the creator would have begun with clay for the creation of living humans.

There is, perhaps, a more subtle reason for the presence of earth-based material in creation myths, and especially in connection with the creation of humans. The supposition that humans were made from clay makes us literally products *of* the earth—children of Mother Earth herself. The realization of this connection in the myth gives the human of the given culture a sense of belonging as opposed to the sense of isolation that might be expected in a world where survival was difficult.

COSMIC EGG IN CREATION

The cosmic egg motif is common to creation from chaos creation myths and is obviously a major symbol within the birth metaphor so prevalent in creation myths. It occurs in all parts of the world.

Some ancient Egyptians considered the cosmic egg to be the soul of the original primeval waters of creation. One story has it that the sun god, as ultimate power, emerged from the primeval mound, itself a version of the cosmic egg resting in the chaos of the primeval sea.

In India the sacred Satapatha *Brahmana* relates the tale of the primeval waters' desire to reproduce. The waters, through a series of prolonged rituals, became so hot that they gave birth to a golden egg. Eventually, after about the time it takes for a woman or a cow to give birth, the creator, Prajapati, emerged from the egg.

A Chinese creation myth describes the beginning as a huge cosmic egg containing the primal being, Pangu. When the egg broke, Pangu appeared as a giant who separated chaos into the many opposites of the *yin* and the *yang*.

In a Japanese version of the Chinese myth, Heaven and Earth were one entity and the *In* (yin) and *Yo* (yang) were still not separated in an egg-like chaos containing the seeds of creation.

The Pelasgians of ancient Greece explained that it was the original being—the goddess Eurynome (a version of the Greek Gaia) who laid the world egg ordered Ophion to encircle it until it hatched the world in all of its diversity.

The later Orphic cult in Greece preached that in the beginning there was a silver cosmic egg, created by Time, and that Phanes-Dionysos broke forth from the egg as the firstborn (*Protogonos*), the androgynous creator who contained the seeds of creation.

In Africa there are many cosmic egg myths. One Dogon myth says that in the beginning, the world egg was shaken by

seven huge rumblings, causing it to divide into two birth sacs, each containing a set of twins fathered by the creator god, Amma, on the maternal egg. Some say that Amma was the cosmic egg and fertilized himself. In any case, in each placenta was a male and a female twin, but each twin contained both the male and female essence. The twins are known as the Nummo, important spirit figures in the Dogon religion.

The Mande people say that in the beginning the creator placed various kinds of seed in the world egg. Among these were seeds for two pairs of twins, each set made up of a male and female; these would become the first people.

Many Polynesian peoples have cosmic egg myths. The Tahitians, for example, tell how the great god Taaroa began existence in an egg and remained there for a long time before breaking out. Then he made part of the egg the sky and became the earth himself.

The practitioners of the Bon religion in Tibet sing of the union in the beginning of two immortals, resulting in three eggs. A golden one produced a golden male arrow of life with turquoise feathers. A turquoise egg gave birth to a turquoise arrow of the female with golden feathers. A white egg gave up a golden spindle. And from the primeval sky and the ocean mist, Bon was born.

As an object prone to fertilization, the egg is an appropriate symbol and metaphor for the idea of potential creation. It is pre-creation chaos waiting to become cosmos. In psychological terms it is the cultural pre-consciousness, the collective being waiting to be made conscious of itself. To quote psychologist Marie Louise von Franz, "we can easily recognize in it the motif of preconscious totality. It is psychic wholeness conceived as the thing that came before the rise of ego consciousness, or any kind of dividing consciousness" (Von Franz, 229). In short, the egg is a symbol of nondifferentiation, differentiation between things being the essence of the creation of anything. It contains within itself male and female, light and dark, all opposites in a state of union. It is perfect entropy and signals the existence of creative power from the very beginning.

COYOTE IN CREATION

Coyote is one of the most popular figures in Native American mythology. In creation he plays several roles. He is sometimes the primary creator, sometimes a culture hero (*See* Culture Heroes in Creation) sent by the creator to help humans, and sometimes a trouble-making trickster (*See* Tricksters in Creation) who undermines the creator's work. Many of the Pueblo people of the Southwest say that once Coyote was perfectly tame and helpful. The Salinan say he helped to create things. In Cupeño and Miwok mythologies he is both a creator and a culture hero. The Nez Perce emphasize his creative aspects, telling how he entered a monster's stomach, killed it, making him, as a monster-killer, a culture hero, and created the world out of the dismembered pieces. The Yokut tell of how he instructed the creators on the necessity of earth-diving in order to find the bit of mud that would grow into the world.

But even as a creator and/or culture hero, Coyote was often at heart a mischievous trickster. The Achomawi Coyote was one of two creators, but while his partner worked, he tended to sleep or eat. The Kootenay Coyote made the sun, but did so with a ball of grease. Coyote helped the Pima creator but advised him in such a way as to make the first created batches of humans highly flawed. When the Okanagan creator sent Coyote to Earth to act as a culture hero, he killed monsters and taught the people how to behave, but he also created different languages so that they would not understand each other, and when he became arrogant, the creator, essentially, fired him. The Maidu version of Coyote spent time with the creator but he and his dog, Rattlesnake, brought mostly trouble to the newly formed world and its people. The Navajo Coyote stayed with the people when Earth and Sky were separated, but he stole Water Monster's children, causing a terrible flood. The Ute animals of the early stages of creation got along well until Coyote corrupted them, causing them to fight each other. The Yokut Coyote helped with creation but walked on the new mountains before they were dry, causing the jaggedness of the Sierra Nevada range. The Yuma Coyote went so far as to steal the heart of the creator, and this is why he became an untamable wild man—a devil of sorts. A psychologically interesting Coyote is Old man Coyote, the creator of the Crow people. Things were going fine until a little version of himself—Little Coyote—simply appeared out of nowhere and acted as a disruptive aspect of creation, balancing Old Man Coyote's constructiveness. This, and, to varying degrees, most Coyote stories, speak to the duality of both human nature and the world itself (*See* Duality in Creation, Two Creators in Creation).

Creation from Chaos. *See* Part I

CREATION MYTHS AS CURING

A creation myth is an explanation of beginnings—how the universe was formed, how the world we live in was formed, and, most particularly and most frequently, how a particular culture came into being. In curing rituals, creation myths are often recited because when things have gone awry, it is natural to go back to the beginning to try again, to return to an earthly paradise. This use of creation myths applies to individuals as well as to whole cultures or groups within cultures.

As Mircea Eliade has suggested, behind this curative use of the myths is "the notion that time is periodically regenerated by symbolic repetition of the creation" (Eliade, *Patterns,* 404–406). Eliade points out that in ancient China, as well as in other parts of the world, new rulers established new creations, even new calendars, to signify that renewal. The Fiji Islanders, for example, recite the Fiji creation myth at the crowning of a new chief and any time the culture is threatened by war, famine, or other emergencies. The Babylonians recited the creation myth at New Year ceremonies, signifying a general regeneration. The hope in such rituals is that by going back to the beginning, the society can have a second chance, can be reborn.

In some Christian traditions the creation story is recited on Easter Eve in connection with the death of Christ and the related death of the old life of the people in favor of a new life in association with the resurrected Jesus. In the same traditions, at the end of the service of Holy Communion, with the ritual sharing of the body and blood of the Christ, the first part of the gospel of John used to be recited. The gospel begins "In the beginning was the Word" and continues to outline what is, in effect, a Christian addendum to the Genesis creation story, now centered on the Christ as the "Word," the *logos* that John says has existed from the beginning of time and is the essence of existence (*See* Christian creation). As the service in question is a kind of curing ceremony in which the sinful are redeemed by participating in the communion ritual, it is appropriate that the service end with the culture's own creation myth.

In many traditions the creation myth is sung or recited in connection with curing ceremonies for individuals. That is, the individual, through a direct connection with the creation, is given the chance to be regenerated; recreated in a healthy state. This is sometimes true, for instance, in Navajo ceremonies that involve the patient sitting in an elaborate sand painting representing creation itself, while a shaman chants various myths, including, in some cases, the creation story.

CULTURE HEROES IN CREATION

Culture heroes are figures who, in the early days after creation, serve as mentors and teachers for the people. They teach survival techniques and appropriate ways to live as a community. In the Acoma myth, the two sisters, Life-Bringer and Full Basket, bring the seeds of culture to the new world of the Acoma people. These sisters are not the only female culture heroes in creation myths. A goddess of the Garo people in India is the culture hero. The woman who falls from the sky is the de facto culture hero for the Cherokee and many Iroquoian tribes. Changing Woman brings fertility to the creation of the Apaches and Navajos.

Sometimes the creator or a deputy comes to Earth as the culture hero, as in the cases of the Apache Black Hactin or the Banks Island Quat. The pre-Incan god Pachacamac sends his son and daughter to teach the people how to live. Sometimes the culture hero is the ancestor of the people. Gikuyu is the ancestor of the African Kikuyu people. Aionia, the son of the first humans of creation, was the culture hero of the Ainu of Japan. The gods were reluctant to allow him back into Heaven because his clothes smelled of humans, so he returned to Earth and turned his clothes into animals. In general, the culture hero is an advocate for the people with the creator and sometimes, as in the case of the Greek Titan Prometheus, he stands against the creator in the people's interest. Prometheus steals firs to help the people and thus enrages the head god, Zeus. The Lenape culture hero Nanapush carries some humans and animals to a cedar tree on a mountain to avoid the flood sent by the gods to destroy them. The African Mande hero Faro gives his life for his people. Sacred twins, such as those of the Maya and Kiowa, are

frequently culture heroes. The culture hero can be a trickster and in that role sometimes brings a dark side of life to his people by introducing such realities as death, as does Coyote in the Maidu myth. Trickster culture heroes are ubiquitous in Native North America. Glooskap, Nanabozho, Michabo, and Napioa are all names for the trickster hero who changes shape to fight monsters, who teaches the people, and who, in various ways, protects the Bloods, the Anishinabe, and many Algonquian peoples.

The presence of several of these trickster culture heroes as animals such as the Anishinabe Great Hare, Coyote, and the north country Raven, suggests an earlier age when humans and animals were believed to have lived together happily, and indicates a connection between the culture hero and the totem animal (*See* Part IV; Totem).

The culture hero is the personification of the cultural self, of cultural understandings and aspirations. If he is not always admirable, he always breaks down the barriers that threaten civilization.

DEATH ORIGIN IN CREATION

Usually, the original world created by a deity or deities is a world in which death does not exist. People placed in the new world are given the same immortality



Roman mosaic of Prometheus giving fire to man. (© Gianni Dagli Orti/CORBIS)

possessed by the gods. Typically, death enters the world after humans, corrupted by a power such as a devil or a trickster, commit some essential crime that leads to a loss of immortality, a loss of the original paradise.

In the Abrahamic tradition Satan enters paradise as a serpent and convinces the woman, Eve, to eat the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil—an act forbidden by the creator. Eve convinces her husband Adam to eat the fruit as well, and the couple is expelled from the Garden of Eden—a place of immortality—and condemned to live a life of hardship that will end in death.

The corrupting element in a creation myth of the Maidu of California, is the creator's assistant, the trickster Coyote, brought death into the world through his dog, Rattlesnake, and ignored the instructions of the creator on how to achieve eternal life. The Yuma people of Arizona tell of a creation dominated by a set of twins—one good, one evil. The good twin created humans but the bad twin undermined the humans and creation itself. The world being imperfect, the good twin taught the people about death and about a restorative afterlife. Many other Native Americans have death origin myths. A particularly moving example is that of the Blackfoot tribe. In that myth, a woman asked the creator whether the people would live for ever. The creator threw a buffalo chip into the river, and announced that if it floated the people would die, but would come back after a short time. And indeed, the chip floated. But the woman was not satisfied. She decided to throw a stone into the water, saying "If it floats we must live forever. If it sinks, people will have to die." When the stone sank, the creator announced that death would end all lives, and the people were sad.

Whereas a woman is often blamed for causing death, as in the Yuma and Hebrew myths, many others have death origin myths in which the male figure is guilty. The Tahitian first man was Ti'i. The first woman was Hina; Hina was good, but Ti'i was not. Ti'i hated humans and cursed creation. He instituted death, but Hina promised to overcome death for humans.

In Africa, the death origin theme is found in creation myths from many parts of the continent. The southeast Congo region Basonge creator, Mwile, created humans, as did his trickster rival Kolombo. Mwile introduced death in an attempt to prove his superior power over the trickster. The Efe people, also of the Congo region, tell an Adam and Eve like myth in which the first couple disobeyed the creator by eating of a forbidden tree causing "us all" to experience death. In Tanzania there is a Nyamwezi myth in which the creator's jealous second wife surreptitiously cut down a forbidden plant related to the first wife, causing blood to pour out of it. By this act the woman brought death into the world.

In the case of the Nigerian Efik tribe the creator god became jealous of his own creation, and to placate him his wife brought down death to humans to limit their power. In Madagascar, the Malagasy creator is said to have become jealous of the people's love for his daughter, Earth Mother, so he decided that he owned the souls of the people and could take them whenever he wanted. Earth

Mother, however, took the person's body back into her body.

The Bantu-speaking Fang also say that the creator attached death to his humans, but that he also gave them soul. The West African Fulani creator made death to destroy worry. The Krachi people of Togo and Ghana were sent death in the form of a bird that ate human flesh. So the creator gave special curing medicine to the dog and instructed him to counteract death. But the dog dropped the medicine when he went to eat a bone, and a goat ate it. This is why grass comes back every year but people die once and do not come back.

According to the Nup people of Nigeria, death came when the people demanded the right to reproduce. They made that demand even though the creator warned them that death would come with the process of making children. The Wahungwe people of Zimbabwe suffered a similar fate when their first man put intercourse and reproduction first in spite of the creator's warnings that death would come to humans.

It is obvious that death has always been a deep human concern. Early humans must have wondered why, unlike the grass and leaves and the sun and moon, they did not seem to return to life after death. And they must have wondered why there should be human death at all. These etiological death origin myths give certain answers. The placing of blame on the female version of original humanity for the coming of death reflects the male fear of the sexual power of women and suggests a determination to put woman in a subservient place vis-à-vis men. There is also the more metaphysical explanation for the woman's role. Whatever the role of the sky god creator, it is the earth—the Great Mother, who takes back the body at death. The women who cause death may, in this connection, be said to be the priestesses of the Mother.

DEUS FABER CREATION

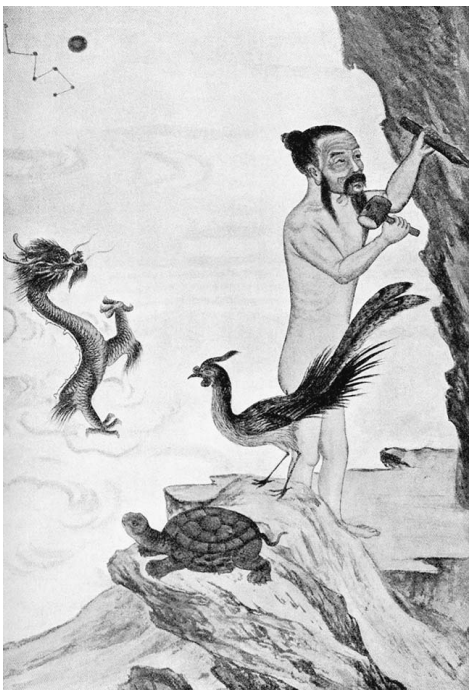
A motif that occurs from time to time in creation myths from various parts of the world is that of the *deus faber*—god as maker or craftsman. In creation myths characterized by the *deus faber* there is a direct connection between human crafts—carpentry, pottery, tent building, sculpture—and the way the creator creates the world. At the creation, the creator is a craftsman.

In China, the first being, Pangu, is often depicted as a carpenter-like figure with a chisel and hammer carving out the world. The Egyptian creator, Ptah, of the Heliopolis tradition, is said to have created the world on a potter's wheel. Spinning is a creative method often associated with Spider Woman or Spider Grandmother in southwestern Native North American myths. In the *Rig Veda* of India the creator is referred to as both a smith and a carpenter.

The Mescalero Apache explain that the world was created as a tent of sorts by four creators known as the Four Grandfathers. When they first tried to set up the world, the wind blew it over several times. So the grandfathers stabilized the earth up by pulling it from four different directions, making each direction like a solid foot. To secure the feet they used four black poles or canes. On the east

side they used a "big black cane, covered with black metal thorns." On the south foot they used a "big blue cane covered with blue metal thorns." On the west they placed a "big yellow cane covered with yellow metal thorns." Finally, on the north foot they placed a "big white cane covered with white metal thorns." This myth is directly associated with the all important female puberty rites practiced by the Apaches. When a girl menstruates for the first time, a sacred lodge is built for her; the form of the lodge is based on the created universe—a circle bisected along the four directions, signified by the four poles established by the grandfathers.

The four directions theme appears frequently in many creation myths, especially of the deus faber sort. The Cahto people of California, for instance, told how Thunder and his companion, Nagaitcho, created the world, beginning by repairing the old sandstone sky and stretching it with rocks that formed the four directions. The Cherokee say that when Water Beetle dove to the bottom of the primeval waters and brought back a bit of mud, and the mud spread out and became the earth-island, the Great Spirit fastened it to the sky with four rawhide cords stretching from the four sacred mountains of the four sacred directions. The Yuki creator made a rope in the primeval darkness and placed it on a north-south axis. Then he walked along it, coiling it and leaving the created earth behind him as he went. Later he made four stone posts and secured them in the ground according to the four directions. To each post he attached lines and stretched them out across the world as a plan. Finally he secured the new world from the primeval waters by lining it with whale hide. The four directions motif within the deus faber creation establishes a quaternity in the universe, a quaternity that represents stability and balance—a stability and balance the importance of which would be understood by any carpenter, sculptor, or dwelling builder.



The mythical Pan-Ku makes the Earth. (Alamy)

Many crafts are referred to in creation myths. Amma, the creator of the Dogon people of Mali and Sudan, used the art of pottery to create the moon and the sun. The sun was a pot brought to white heat and glazed with red copper. The moon was not heated as high and white copper surrounds it. The Hebrew creator in the Book of Job in the Bible (Chapter 38) acted as a builder. He asks Job: "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?" The daughter of the creator

of the Malagasy of Madagascar made little clay dolls, into which the creator blew breath so that the dolls could become living human beings. The Mayan creators, too, made a human form out of clay. When it disintegrated upon getting wet they carved the human forms out of wood. The Polynesian creator molded the first woman from red clay. In a Romanian myth, the creator is a weaver. After he made Heaven, he measured the space underneath with a ball of thread and then began to form the earth. As a mole held the thread, God wove the patterns of the earth.

The basing of creation myths on crafts practiced by given cultures serves an important purpose. The fact that the creator is a tent builder or potter or sculptor makes him one of us, and that in turn makes what we do sacred and significant. The deus faber creation is a celebration of human ingenuity and a justification for what we do. And it turns what we do into something mystical and magical. It makes our crafts microcosmic representations of creation itself. The crafts are mysteries; magical processes understood only by the creators within the craft community. It is in this light that medieval crafts were called mysteries, and this is why certain plays performed in village squares by members of various medieval craft guilds were called mystery plays.

DEUS OTIOSUS OR ABSCONDITUS IN CREATION

In many religious traditions the creator god essentially retires from the world he has created and leaves it to others to run—to humans or lesser gods. In short, he does not interfere with the world once he has created it. This is the Deus Otiosus. His mythological relative is the Deus Absconditus who more actively absents himself from his creation.

The absent god is especially prevalent in African mythology. The Bushman creator, Mantis, lived here with humans in the old days. But human foolishness upset him so much that he left the world in disgust, leaving the people hungry. The Kikuyu creator sent the culture hero Gikuyu to help the people. He taught Gikuyu how to perform sacrifices if he needed anything, "then he went away." The Malozi of Zambia tell a more complex story. Nyambe, the creator, was so disgusted by the fact that his creature, Man, insisted on eating his brother animals, that he retired to a mountain to escape the man. The creator invited the animals to join him in his safe place but they decided to stay in the world. Man kept trying to find Nyambe, even building a tower to try to get to him and praying to him every day. But Nyambe stayed away. The Central African Ngombe creator once lived with the people but "he got so tired of human quarrels that he left and has not been seen since." In the same way, the Bantu Yao people of southern Africa say that the creator was so disgusted with human behavior that he asked the spider to spin a rope so he could escape to the heavens, where he remains to this day. The Zulu creator also left his creation and "nobody knows where he is now."

There are *deus otiosus* and *deus absconditus* stories in myths elsewhere as well. Ndengei was the Fiji Islanders' creator but "he pretty much stays away," even though the people still pray to him.

The Joshua Indians of Oregon tell how the creator lived with the first woman and had many children—the ancestors of the various tribes—with her before leaving for the heavens. The Papago creator, First Man, left the world after creating the animals and the people. The Inupiat creator, Raven, did much the same thing.

There is perhaps nothing truly surprising about this motif. In most of the world's dominant religious systems the only direct contact with the creator is by prayer. God-Yahweh-Allah and the various gods of India have long since stopped spending time in conversation with humans on Earth.

Christian theologians, such as Thomas Aquinas and Martin Luther, have used the hidden god concept to emphasize that God is unknowable but that we can know God through the tangible living Christ, Jesus. Deists, on the other hand, find in the Deus Otiosus—the clock-maker God who made the world, wound it up and then left—simply a rational explanation for life as we know it.

For the atheist, the Deus Otiosus is a myth used to excuse the evils of life. For those who doubt but long for a better life, the hidden god is an inner security longed for but painfully absent. For others, the stories of the absent creator speak to a longing for a lost mythological age when the world perhaps was a happier place.

DEVIL IN CREATION

A character who is explicitly or implicitly the Devil is frequently present in creation myths. People in the Abrahamic traditions are, of course, familiar with the Devil as Satan—according to the biblical story in Genesis, God had forbidden the first humans, Adam and Eve, to eat the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil on pain of death. But the Serpent, who is presumably an embodiment of the Devil—also known as Satan, the fallen, sinful angel, Lucifer—sneaks into the Garden of Eden and convinces Eve to eat of the tree so that she can be more like God, with a knowledge of good and evil. Eve is convinced and in turn convinces Adam, and they eat of the tree, thus bringing death into the world. The Ngombe people of Africa tell a similar story in which the first woman is corrupted by the deceptive Ebenga.

Devils, almost by definition, institute a duality in creation by opposing the plans of the creator. In some cases the devil figure is a twin brother of a culture hero, as is the case in Iroquoian earth-diver myths such as those of the Oneida and the Tuscarora, in which a good twin struggles against a devilish one. The same twin-based duality exists in the Yuma Indian myth as well.

In other Native North American mythologies a trickster figure—Iktome or Coyote, for example—is an assistant to the creator and, by undermining his superior's creation, acts as a de facto devil. The Assiniboine Iktome is a creator but he has the Devil inside, as it were, because of his trickster nature. He introduces death and horse stealing to his people. In the Crow creation, Coyote, too, spawns an embodiment of a devil from within himself. This devil, known as Little Coyote, damages the newly created world with his mischief. In the Achomawi myth, Coyote is a companion to the creator. Like most tricksters, he has

no self-control and is, therefore, a threat to creation. The Maidu version of Coyote brings death to the previously immortal people by allowing his dog, Rattlesnake, into their world. Coyote among the Ute causes the people and animals to fight.

The source of the trickster/devil figure can probably be traced to Central Asia—the original homeland of many Native American ancestors. The Altaic people tell of two black geese flying over the primeval waters at the beginning of time. One of these geese was really the creator; the other was the Devil, Erlik. Erlik continually challenges and tries to outwit the creator until he is finally soundly punished. The Buriat, Samoyed and Siberian-Tartar peoples all have myths in which the creator molds humans and then goes off to find them souls, leaving them under the protection of the dog. When the Devil (Erlik or Skiktur) tricks the dog into not minding the humans, the devil corrupts them. The Tungus and Turkic creators are challenged by their companion Devil (Buninka or Er Kishi).

The function of the devil theme in the collective human dream is to explain the essential duality that exists in human nature and in nature itself. There is love but there is also hatred. To hunt for necessary food is to kill plants and animals. There is birth, but there is also death.

DISMEMBERMENT OF PRIMORDIAL BEING AS CREATION

The themes of dismemberment and sacrifice in creation (*See* Sacrifice in Creation) are closely related. A primal being is sacrificed to become the world or a monster is defeated and carved up to become the world. Whether the result of an act of planned sacrifice or the result of defeat by a more powerful being, the dismemberment of the primal being results in an animistic creation—each part of creation being literally animated by the life of the primordial being. The dismemberment theme is, therefore, also closely related to the theme of the animistic creation (*See* Animistic Creation).

In some case the primal being simply dies. That is, he or she is not sacrificed. The Algonquin Earth Mother dies and her co-creator, the culture hero Glooskap, in a de facto dismemberment act, creates all of nature from the parts of her body. In the Bon tradition there is a story of the Klu Queen who makes the world out of her own body—the sky from her head, the planets from her teeth, the moon from her eyes. The Chinese primal man, Pangu, dies and his breath becomes the wind, his eyes the sun and moon, his four limbs the four directions, his body hair the plants.

The sacrifice of positive figures can be important in dismemberment myths and can have positive results. In the Indian *Rig Veda* creation myth, the primal man, Purusha, is sacrificed by the gods and dismembered. His bottom quarter becomes the earth and his various body parts become everything that is—the Vedas, the castes, the rituals, the planets, the moon, and so forth. In Ceram in Indonesia, the murdered and buried Hainuwele is dug up by her guardian, cut into pieces, and planted. She becomes the staple plant foods of her people. The evil brother of the West African Mande twin Faro sacrifices him and cuts him into 60 pieces,

but these pieces become trees, the symbols of resurrection. In Polynesian Tonga two gods fight over a child and eventually sacrifice it, cutting it in two so that it becomes the sun and the moon. The severed fingers of the Inuit Oqomiut Sedna become whales and other sea animals.

In an ancient Celtic myth a tyrannical father god is sacrificed by his offspring. His skull becomes the sky and his blood the sea. In Greece, the cruel father god Ouranos is castrated and the foam from his severed genitals results in the goddess of love, Aphrodite. The Micronesian father god of the Gilbert Islands is killed and his eyes take the form of the sun and moon.

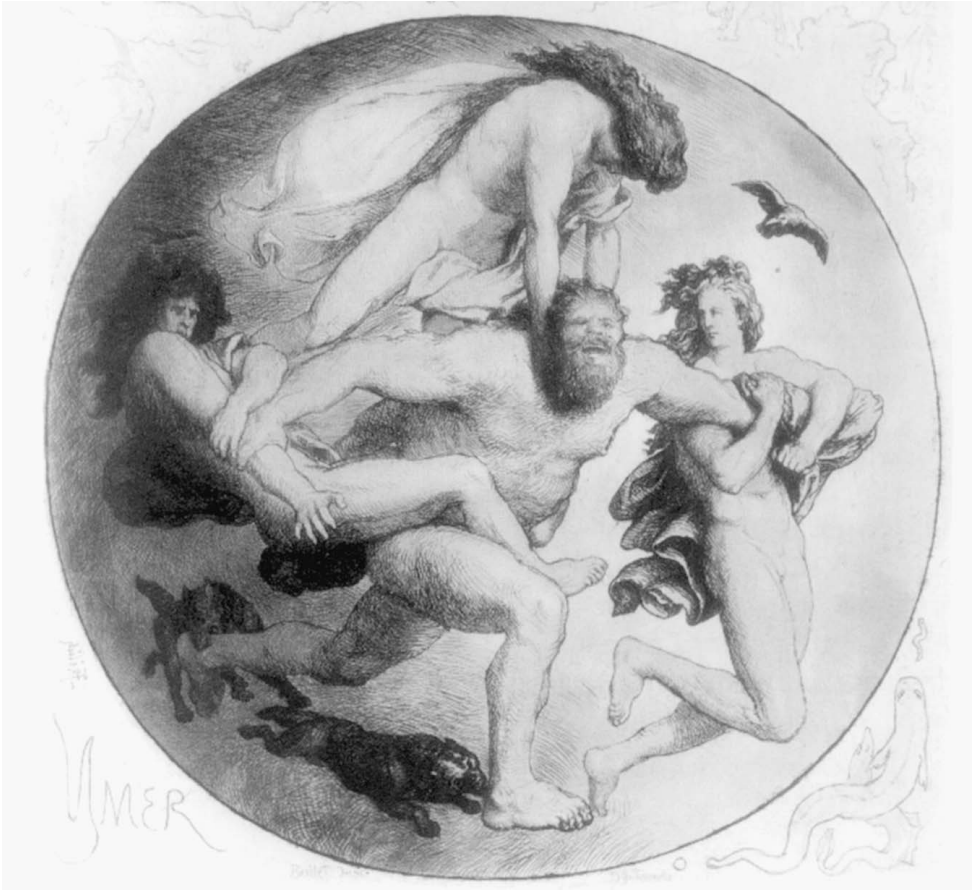
The primary theme within the dismemberment story type is that of the conquest of dismemberment of a chaotic monster by a force representing order. The Babylonian hero, Marduk, defeats the ancient goddess-monster Tiamat and her lover and dismembers them, forming an orderly universe out of their body parts. In the same way, the Aztec gods of light and darkness—Quetzalcoatl and Tezcatlipoca—dismember the devouring



Dismemberment of Coyolxauhqui the moon goddess, killed every month by the Sun, shown here with decapitated head and dismembered body. (The Art Archive / Museo del Templo Mayor Mexico / Gianni Dagli Orti)

goddess whose body is turned into earth and sky and whose hair becomes plants, her eyes water, and her mouth rivers. The Norse gods defeat and dismember the Frost Giant, Ymir, whose body becomes the earth, his blood the seas, his bones the mountains, and his skull the sky. The Nez Perce Coyote defeats a terrible monster and turns its feet into the Blackfoot Indians and its head into the Flatheads (the Salishan). Its blood becomes the Nez Perce. The Dhammai people of India tell of the primal couple defeating the monster Worm and turning his body into Earth and Sky.

All of these myths point to a belief in a chaotic source for a new age, a new creation. The present world is seen as the product of the defeat of that ancient chaotic world by the representative of the given tribe; the representative of the new order. The new creation is tied to the old; the primordial power is still in our world but broken up and controlled in such



Odin and his brothers kill and dismember Ymir, whose body goes on to create earth and sky. (Library of Congress)

a way as to become the elements that make life possible—the sun, the moon, the plants, the mountains, the animals, and us.

DREAMING AS CREATION

The concept of "The Dreaming" (*Altjeringa*), or "Dreamtime" as the creation time, is peculiar to the indigenous peoples of Australia—people known collectively as the Australian Aborigines. The dreaming—what others might call "myth time"—is a time that existed before time In that time certain god-like ancestors walked about Australia, and the things they did and the places they touched became the places, people, animals, plants, traditions, shrines, and even the rituals that exist to this day. In this sense, the dreamtime transcends linear time.

The Arandan of central Australia celebrate a god-ancestor, Kaora, who awoke in dreamtime in a place called the Ilbalintja Soak where the elements of creation sprang from his body. Among the Kakadu in northern Australia, the creators are the giant Wuraka and Imberombera, the female figure he meets as he walks about. From their relationship—particularly from the body of Imberombera—came the various aspects of the Kakadu world. The Ngurunderi of South Australia center on the eponymous ancestor god, Ngurunderi, who walked about in search of his two missing wives. Everything the god and his wives did and/or touched in the course of the chase became the world that still exists. In another dreaming myth about a trio of creators, various people such as the Yolugu in East Arnheim Land tell of the dreamtime travels of the Djanggawul—an ancestor god and his two sisters—all sporting enormous genitalia—who are, in effect, fertility deities, the source for everything that is. The Djanggawul are still celebrated with sacred phallic totem objects and a 500-part song cycle.

Many other dreamtime ancestors exist in various parts of Australia. The pattern is always the same. To the extent that we can associate dreamtime with the more ordinary concept of dreams, we can say that the myths of the Aborigines are cultural dreams that explain who they are and where they and their world came from. More importantly, the dreamtime concept, by definition, endows everything that is with an animistic power and significance. The real world is the child of the dreaming. (*See* The Creation Myths; Australian)

DUALITY IN CREATION

Creation myths involving two creators, a creator and a trickster/devil assistant, and, in many cases, twins, are generally concerned with what the given culture sees as an essential duality in creation—a universal and eternal struggle between goodness and evil, creation and anti-creation. In the Native American myth of the Achomawi, Silver Fox and Coyote are twin creators, but the industrious Silver Fox does most of the work as the amoral, lazy, and always ravenous Coyote eats whatever he can and spends a great deal of time sleeping. The Lenape of the east cost of America discover a universal duality in everything around them—light and dark, good and evil, male and female. The Algonquins of Canada express

duality more metaphorically in the persons of Glooskap and Malsum, the good and evil sons of Earth Mother, respectively, indicating a belief in an inherent duality that is born of the earth itself. The duality the world knows is reflected in the eternal war between the two brothers. The theme of the opposition between the good twin and the bad twin is fully developed in the creation myths of the Iroquoian speaking peoples—the Huron, Oneida, Seneca, Tuscarora, and Wyandot, for example. Again, the message is that the duality in question is inherent in creation itself, as the twins are born of the Woman Who Fell from the Sky or her daughter—both representatives of the divinity that is the creator in the sky.

Devil figures such as the bad twins of the Native Americans are ubiquitous in world mythology. The Mande twins, evil Pemba and good Faro, struggle during the creation. The Hottentot people come from Tsui-[click]-Goab, which once fought a long and difficult battle against a negative force, [click]-Gaunab. Satan in the Hebrew myth defies the goodness of the creator and interjects death and sin into the lives of humans for all time. The Zoroastrian good deity, Ahura Mazda, is opposed eternally by his opposite, Angra Mainyu. Something of the same opposition exists in Mesoamerica, among the Aztecs, for instance, for whom duality was explained by the presence together of the Feathered Serpent Quetzalcoatl and his dark brother Tezcatlipoca. One Tibetan Bon tradition holds that creation resulted from the struggle between the powers of light, "Radiance," and those of darkness, "Black Misery." The Dark Lord is said to have created all that is anti-existence out of a cosmic egg, while the white lord created all that is good.

Among Central Asians such as the Altaic, Buriat, and Mongolian peoples, the Devil is a companion of the creator, undermining his creation from the beginning of time. The Melanesian Banks Island people tell of a brother of the creator who undermined creation. The implication is that duality is basic to creation itself. Nowhere is that sense of the universality of duality more present than in the creation myth of the Yuma tribe of Arizona. In that myth the creator himself was born of the primeval waters as the twins; good Kokomaht and evil Bakotahl.

The subject of a duality inherent in creation explains the duality that quite obviously exists in all societies—the eternal dance of opposites. It also raises the question as to whether one of two opposite principles can exist meaningfully without the other. What is goodness without the evil against which to see it? What is light without the darkness it might be?

Earth-Diver Creation. *See Part I*

Emergence Creation. *See Part I*

ETIOLOGICAL CREATION MYTHS

Etiological myths explain specific aspects of life. In Greece the myth of Persephone, for instance, can be said to be an etiological myth explaining spring. In that they explain how the world came about, all creation myths can be said to have an etiological aspect. In this sense,



Ahura Mazda, name for a divinity exalted by Zoroaster as the one uncreated Creator, hence God. Yazd, Iran. (Dreamstime)

scholars have spoken of etiological creation myths as primitive science. Certainly all origin myths—myths of the "how the leopard got its spots" variety—can be called etiological. Creation myths can be said to be particularly etiological in character when they answer such questions as "How did the seasons come about?", "Why are there different races and languages?", "Why is the moon up in space?". The Nup, Fang, Krachi, and Wahungwe tribes in Africa all have myths that explain the origin of death, as do the Maidu, Yuma, Blackfoot, and other Native American peoples. In North America the Crow and the Salishan tribes have creation myths that explain the origin of different languages. The Altaic and Buriat peoples of Central Asia explain through myth how the dog got fur and also why dogs are considered by them to be inferior animals. The Tsimshian of Alaska explain in their creation myth the existence of time. The Jivaro of South America explain the source of human ills. The African Boshongo myth explains why we have lightning. The North American Creek myth explains why animals fear humans. The Bulu people of Africa explain why animals and humans live where they do. The Chiricahua Apache reveal the origin of white people and Indian people. Cultural traditions are often explained in creation myths. The Dogon myth explains the practice of female circumcision. The Dyak of Borneo have a creation myth that explains why clay pots were made and why they are sacred. The Pawnee of North America explain the source of their sacred bundles. Among the Australian Aborigines, the dreaming creation myths are all etiological in that they explain the existence of both sacred places and traditions. Animistic creation myths—especially those involving the use of parts of a primordial being or world parent to create the world—are, by definition, etiological. The Norse, Babylonian, Tibetan Bon, Aztec, and many other mythologies explain the world in this way. In sum, although it is fair to say that some creation myths have more

of an etiological purpose than others in terms of particular aspects of existence, all creation myths are to some extent etiological in that their primary intention is to explain how things began.

Ex Nihilo Creation. *See Part I*

FALL FROM GRACE IN CREATION

Not surprisingly, the awareness of a lack of perfection in the world and the capacity for evil and wrongdoing in the human personality have led many cultures to describe a fall from grace in the early days of creation. Central to the fall from grace theme is the assumption that the world originally created was perfect but that, either through the manipulation of a devil figure or because of some inherent need in the human to disobey the creator or to give in to an inherent selfishness and arrogance, humans have fallen from a state of grace to one that characterizes the actual world in which we live.

In several cultures the disobedience of the first woman is the catalyst for the fall. In the Altaic tradition the first woman is corrupted by a devil. The biblical Eve instigates the fall by eating forbidden fruit. Among the Gonds of India, it is the wife of the god Mahadeo (Shiva) who causes the fall by eating a forbidden vegetable. In several African myths—the Dina, Efik, and Nyamwezi myths, for example—the first woman is also the culprit in the fall story (*See* Woman as Source of Evil).

In several African myths, such as those of the Malozi and Yao, the fall from grace arises when the creator leaves the world in disgust over the arrogance of people (*See* Deus Otiosus). The African Fang say that the first man, Fam, was expelled from the world for arrogance. One Egyptian myth tells how the people became so arrogant that they were driven into the desert. The Pomo people of California say the arrogant early people were destroyed by fire. The North American Creek Indians have a myth that says human arrogance led to a failure of what was once a perfect communication between humans and animals. In Mesoamerica, the Maya and Toltec believed that the early people fell because of their arrogance and were destroyed by floods. Floods also ended the grace period of the people in the Sumerian and Roman myths. Disobedient giants fell from grace and were destroyed by floods in the Arikara myth of North America and the Aymaran myth of South America. Devils corrupted the first peoples of the North American Lenape and Yuma, and the African Mande, and world-ending floods were the result (*See* Devil in Creation).

In many cases the fall from grace is the result of human lack of respect for the creator. In a pique over being ignored, the creator sends a flood as punishment, thus establishing a total fall. This is the case in the myths of the Chiricahua Apache and the Anishinabe of North America (*See* Flood in Creation).

For some Africans—the Krachi and Wapangwa, for instance—the fall, represented by the coming of death, seems to be through no particular fault of the people. In a Wyot myth the first humans were destroyed by a flood simply because they came out furry when the creator made them. In short, in the collective human psyche, the fall seems to be a necessary aspect of creation, whatever the role of people themselves.

The fall from grace has been a particularly strong element within the Christian religion. In the Christian myth borrowed from the Hebrews, the original sin of Adam and Eve has been the traditional explanation for the original fall from grace and the continuing sinfulness of humanity, the reason, as indicated in the story told by John, the Christ comes to the world to reverse the fall.

FATHER CREATORS

The concept of the creator as a father springs from common understandings. Patriarchal cultures naturally project their belief that the father should be the head of the family, clan, or nation into stories of the creation by and dominance of a penultimate father figure. Often, as in the case of the South Pacific New Hebrides creation myth, the African Wahungwe creation myth, or those of the North American Nez Perce, Penobscot, and Lenape, the creator makes first beings that will literally give birth to creation. The father creator myths reflect actual social arrangements of the cultures that tell the myths. In many myths the father god has a son whom he sends out to represent him on Earth, as in the case of the African Baluba, Bulu, Maasai, and Kikuyu peoples, and the South American Jivaro and Mosetene. The myths can reflect common family problems. The Japanese relationship of the creator father Izanagi and his wife Izanami is fraught with misunderstanding and ends in violent separation. The African Efik creator is an unreasonably demanding father. The Oqomiut myth of Sedna and her father, Anguta, is one fraught with sexual tension and violence. The Basonge creator, also African, is directly challenged by his son, and many myths about the separation of primordial parents involve extreme dysfunction in the relationships between fathers and their children (*See* Part I; World Parent Creation).

Furthermore, since for all cultures the obvious place to look for creation metaphors is the familiar process of procreation, the creator god in the sky is more often than not seen as the father catalyst or fecundator while the actual birth-giver, if she is included in the myth, is associated with the earth as a universal mother (*See* Birth as Creation Metaphor, Goddess as Creator). In ex nihilo myths especially, the role of the mother is eliminated.

In short, the concept of the creator as father is one of the most common motifs in creation mythology. El was thought of by the people of ancient Canaan as the "father of the gods." The creator of the Bible, as understood by Christians, becomes the father figure in a complex Trinitarian God doctrine, which includes the father's son, Jesus, and an entity known as the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who, in the story, is responsible for impregnating the Virgin Mary with the Father's son, Jesus, thus instigating what, for Christians, would be a new creation. The African father god, Amma, of the African Dogon, has intercourse with his wife—presumably Earth—filling her with water (his seed), an act that results in sacred twins who continue the process of creation.

The Babylonian father, Apsu, the sweet waters, mingled with Tiamat, the female salt waters, thus fathering an early stage of life on Earth. The Anato-



El, father of the gods, and an orant. Bas-relief on a serpentine stele. Late middle Syrian period, from the acropolis at Ugarit (Ras Shamra), Syria. (Erich Lessing / Art Resource, NY)

lian Sky-Weather-Storm god fathers two children on the Mother goddess as part of creation. All Australian male ancestor gods of myth time (*See* Dreaming as Creation) are creative fertility father figures, indicated by the fact that their genitals are exaggerated to the point of comedy, as in the case of the Yolugu Djanggawul, who fathers elements of creation with his sisters, and the Kakadu Wuraka, whose giant penis must be dragged along the ground and who uses that penis to impregnate the mother of the world.

In many cases the father god is little more than a seed bearer; the fecundator deemed necessary to make sense of the procreative metaphor but unnecessary once the fertilization is complete. The creation story of the Acoma tribe of southwestern North America is dominated by female figures, but the seeds of creation are provided by a distant father. The same is true of the southwestern Hopi, for whom Spider Woman is the central creation figure while the male Tawa is an almost invisible father. In the Central Asian Chukchee myth, too, the creator Raven seems a somewhat ignorant adjunct to the mother creator. The father god of the Iroquoian and Iroquoian-influenced earth-diver myths—those of the Cherokee, Onondaga, and Seneca, for example—in which Sky Woman falls to Earth to supervise creation there, is a distant figure, necessary only for having been the father of the myth's central figure. In the Onondaga myth, however, the father is somewhat more important as a figure for which his daughter searches.

The method by which the father god impregnates the being that will give birth to creation is sometimes bizarre. The North American Mandan creator, Lone Man, enters a woman as a kernel of corn and thus instigates an aspect of creation. The Persian Yima penetrates Mother Earth as a golden arrow. The Sudanese Shilluk creator, Jo-Uk, creates a sacred white cow and with her makes a son. The Southeast Asian Negritos father creator, Pedn, and his wife Manoid, create children in dreams from pieces of fruit. The Tlingit Raven instigates a creation act by becoming a piece of dirt in the drink of the "daughter of light," thus making her pregnant. Father-daughter incest plays an implicit or explicit role in the creation myths of India and in the myths of the

Malagasy of Madagascar and the Wyot of California.

By far the most common role of the father figure in creation myths is to initiate creation as a god representing the Sky by mating with a goddess representing Earth, as is the case, for instance, among the Apache, the Luiseño, the Papago, and the Pima of North America, the Lugbara of Africa, and the Dhammai of India. Sometimes the Sky/Earth mating is secondary to an earlier creation. The Zuni father creator Awonawilona made the seed with which he impregnated the primeval waters with Awitelin Tsita (Earth Mother) and Apoyan Ta'chu (Sky Father). Only later did Sky Father and Earth Mother come together to engender the creatures of our world.

Perhaps the oldest Sky Father/Earth Mother myth is that of the ancient Sumerians. In that myth the male principle, An (Heaven), mingles with the female principle, Ki (Earth), to form Anki (Heaven-Earth). Often the mating couples are separated by their offspring (*See* Part I; World Parent Creation). The African Krachi father is separated from his spouse, as are the Indian Minyong Sky Father, Melo, and the Polynesian Sky Father, Rangi. The separation can be violent, sometimes involving death or castration, the fate of the father gods of the Greeks, the continental Celts, and the Gilbert islanders of the South Pacific.

The role of the father in creation can, in certain highly matriarchal or matrilineal cultures, be superseded by the role of the mother, as, for instance, in the Acoma myth mentioned above (*See* Goddess in Creation).

FLOOD IN CREATION MYTHS

Stories of a massive world-destroying flood are common in mythologies from many parts of the world. More often than not, the flood is caused by the creator in order to do away with the very humans he had created earlier. These humans have become arrogant, evil, or at least delinquent in their gratitude to the creator. The pattern of what we can call the ur flood myth, then, involves 1) a post-creation corruption, 2) a destruction of the original creation—especially its human component, and 3) a flood hero survivor who emerges from the flood as the basis for a new humanity.

In many ways, the flood myth is a return to the original act of creation. In the context of the ex nihilo creation myth, the creator chooses to destroy the world and begin again. In the creation from chaos context, the creator reestablishes the chaos of the primeval waters so that creation can take place again. The survivor of the flood reenacts the emergence creation theme, emerging as a new human from the depths of the deluge. The sacrifice of the world parent creation is also reenacted in the death of the old world so that a new world can be born. And, as the earth-diver hero dives into the maternal waters to bring up the bit of Mother Earth out of which the world will grow, the flood hero survives the return of those maternal waters that he must experience in order that life may begin again.

In North America, the flood myth occurs in both the east and the west. The

flood in the myth of the Anishinabe of the Great Lakes region was sent by the Great Spirit to destroy the world and its arrogant people. Only the culture hero Nanabozho and a few creatures he chooses are saved by floating on a log. After the flood recedes somewhat, the culture hero becomes the center of an earth-diver event that will begin a second creation. Among the eastern Lenape, the flood hero is Nanapush, who saves himself and a few good creatures he carries in his shirt by climbing a mountain and a tree on the mountain. The Chiricahua Apache Great Spirit sends a flood to destroy the people because they have ignored him, and, like Nanapush, a few survivors climb a mountain to remain above the waters. In an Arikara story the Sky Chief sends a flood to destroy the first people—a race of giants—who have been disrespectful to him. A few of these giants are preserved as corn kernels underground. After the flood these kernels will give birth to Mother Corn, who will bring about the emergence of new people from the earth. The Navajo gods used a flood to send the corrupt people out of the first world so that they might begin their gradual emergence into our world. Water Monster pushes them out of the fourth world with a flood and the people are saved by a mysterious old man—doubtless a god—who provides them with a large hollow reed to use as a final emergence vehicle. The Brule Sioux of South Dakota also have a Water Monster flood myth. In this case the monster's flood is survived by a beautiful maiden, who is saved by Eagle. Later she marries Eagle and gives birth to the Sioux nation. The Californian Salinan flood myth features a jealous Sea Woman who, jealous of the creator's work, tries to destroy it by pouring water onto it from her giant basket. The creator, Eagle, manages to save the day and the people. The Pomo of California say simply that the first people were bad, so the creator destroyed them in a flood and made new people. The Arizonan Pima people say much the same thing. Their post flood world was created by a god known as Elder Brother and his assistant, Coyote. Creators do not always use the flood to punish. They can also be frighteningly arbitrary. The creator of the west coast Wyot people simply did not like his furry first people so he flooded them to death. Only Condor and his sister survived, and their incestuous relationship created new people. The Gond people of India have a similar myth involving a brother and sister. The west coast Cahto creator, Thunder, created a world and then, for no particular reason, destroyed it with a flood, allowing only water animals to be saved. The Cheyenne Great Power at least warned the people that a flood was coming and they were able to move to another place to escape destruction. It should be noted that the Cheyenne have undergone many migrations, for which this flood myth can serve as a metaphor.

The Inuit people of the far north also have flood myths. The Netsilik say that an ancient flood left only two men alive. In order that the race might survive, the men used their shamanic power to turn one of them into a woman. In this way it was possible to procreate new Netsilik. The Tlingit say the creator Raven caused

a destructive flood and then made new humans out of leaves.

In Mesoamerica, the Toltec, Mixtec, and Mayans all have flood myths in which a creator destroys an evil world and then creates a new one.

Flood myths exist in South America as well. Even the Andean Aymaran have a flood story. Their Snow God creator, Kun, sends an ice flood to destroy humans, but then sends fertility gods to create a new people. For some Aymaran the creator is Pachacamac, who flooded a first world of wicked giants and made new humans out of clay. The Mapuche of Chile tell the story of Kai-Kai, the Water Serpent, who flooded the world. The few survivors who climbed a mountain above the waters became the Mapuche people. The Ipurina of Brazil tell how the creator flooded the world with a great bucket of boiling water heated in the sun, but somehow failed to kill the people. The jealous wife of the Muysca creator tried to destroy the people with a flood, but her husband, the Sun, quickly dried up the waters.

In Africa the Mande hero-creator Faro—a personification of the fertilizing Niger River—floods the world to save his people from his evil brother Pemba, who represent the opposite of fertility. The flood myth of the Wapangwa of Tanzania describes how ants defecated the material of which the world is made and then had to be flooded away before humans could be created.

Norse mythology explains that it was the blood of the sacrificed frost giant Ymir that flooded the ancient world. Only one giant and his wife survived that flood.

Many ancient flood myths preceded the ones described above. The Egyptian god Ra became disgusted with humans and sent his Eye—the Sun—as the goddess Hathor to destroy the world. Later Hathor became the terrifying lion goddess Sekhmet. When Ra changed his mind, he sent a flood of beer to cover the earth—perhaps a metaphor for the annual flooding of the Nile—and a now drunk Sekhmet stopped her destruction, allowing new life to emerge from the fertilizing flood.

The mythical Chinese Emperor Yu is said to have rescued China from a terrible flood and reconstituted the topography of his nation. The Greeks and Romans told the story of how Zeus ended the Bronze Age with a flood because of human arrogance and how Prometheus's son Deucalion and his wife Pyrrha were saved because Prometheus told them to ride out the flood in a kind of ark. After the couple landed on a mountain top they made a sacrifice to Zeus and he instructed them to throw down stones that would become a new race of men and women.

In the western world the best known flood story is the one from the biblical book of Genesis, in which Yahweh-God-Allah punishes the world for its wickedness by inundating it. Only Noah and his family were allowed to survive in their ark and to become the progenitors of a new race of people. The biblical myth has its source in a similar Sumerian-Babylonian myth of which the flood hero is Ziasudra/Utnapishtim, who tells the flood story to the visiting hero, Gilgamesh.

There is a long tradition of attempting to associate such floods as the one in the biblical book of Genesis with actual

historical events, but the flood story exists in mythologies of areas where floods could well have occurred as well as in areas where they almost certainly could not have occurred. It seems more likely that from the beginning flood stories were intended to be metaphorical or mytho-historical, to convey the sense of a failed creation that the creator needed to destroy in order that a new and better creation might be established. Psychologically, the myth speaks to our own sense of guilt as failed beings and of our desire for a second chance.

The essence of the flood myth—the symbolic power of its message—is repeated in various rituals involving water. Hindus bathe in the sacred rivers, Muslims perform ablutions before prayer, Jews have several forms of ritual bathing, and Christians have baptism. In these and other cases like them in other traditions, the bathing represents a washing away—a killing—of the old life in order than a new life might arise. The participant in the ritual has a symbolic analogue in the surviving flood hero and becomes the vehicle for a new life. In this sense, the flood is a cosmic or cultural baptism.

FOUR DIRECTIONS IN CREATION

The four directions—North, South, East, and West—are of particular importance in the creation myths of Native North America, though they do occur in mythologies of cultures elsewhere. The ball of dirt on the Turtle's back in the myth of the Anishinabe of the American midwest was urged into expansion to become the earth by the winds of the four directions. A Jicarilla creation myth notes that after they emerged from underground, the first people traveled in the four directions, breaking off from the migration at various stages to become the Native American tribes. In the same way, the newly created Omaha wandered in the four directions until they discovered their identity in association with their Midwestern homeland. The Jicarilla also say that Black Hactcin, the creator, first oriented himself by facing the four directions before he lay down on the ground and made sketches of himself to begin the creation of the world from his own body. For all Apaches, the four directions play an important role in every girl's puberty ceremony. The hut associated with the ritual, for instance, is oriented in a particular way according to the directions, signaling a renewal of the original creation. The Cahto of California have creators who remade the old sandstone sky in preparation for creation. They established the sky as a tent-like structure with rocks for each of the four directions. For the California Yuki it is posts rather than rocks. Also in California, the Diegueños creators arranged the four directions as soon as they raised the sky off the earth. The Pomo creator of the Northern California Pomo held up four of his hairs to the four directions, and these led him to his brother, from whom he needed advice in the creative process. The brothers began their work by facing each of the directions in turn and proclaiming the future creation. The Winnebago creator established order by creating the four directions in the very beginning. The southwestern Yuma creator did the

same thing The East coast Lenape creator made spirits of the four directions—Rock, Fire, Wind, and Water—and gave each one a season, thus organizing the newly created world. The Navajo emergence worlds were secured by the four directions. In a Pawnee myth the four directions attempt to protect the honor of the Evening Star.

In China, the legs and arms of the first being, Pangu, become the four directions. Norse mythology says that the four corners of the sky—the four directions—are held up by four dwarves named for the directions. In the Pacific Marshall Islands the creator turned four gods into the four directions and not too far away, in the New Hebrides, the creator sang spells towards each of the four directions as the sky was raised off the earth. The Mayan creators of Central America made the first four humans out of the four directions. The Made people of Mali, in Africa, tell how the creator made seed that became the four directions.

The significance of the four directions lies in the number four and in the belief in an orderly universe. The number four tends to signify completeness, a quaternity, which covers all that exists. To be centered by the four directions is to be made particularly meaningful as a culture. The four directions reach out from the center of the world—that is, from wherever the people are. A world created according to the principle of the four directions is a properly ordered world, one based on the quaternal concept of wholeness.

GODDESS AS CREATOR

Although the majority of creators in creation mythology are father figures, a Mother Goddess creator appears with significant frequency. Among several southwestern American peoples a goddess is the primary creator, even though she technically has a mate, in keeping with the procreative metaphor that pervades the myth it is she who directs creation and is responsible for it. The Acoma and Laguna tribes call her Thinking Woman. The Zia call her Prophesying Woman. In general the Tewa speaking peoples and the Hopi, as well as the Laguna and Acoma peoples, also think of her as Spider Woman—she who spins the world into existence. It is significant that most of these tribes are matrilineal rather than patrilineal, making it appropriate that a female figure should guide the creative process. Other Native Americans who also tend to be matrilineal feature the woman who falls from the sky, Sky Woman, as the driving creative force. The Cherokee Sky Woman creates corn, beans, and other essential elements from her own body. The Huron Sky Woman also creates these materials. In fact, the Iroquoian Sky Woman is always associated with Earth and its creative power. She is, in effect, Mother Earth. The Mohawk Sky Woman is a good example of this as well. The Central Asian Chukchee wife of Raven literally gives birth to much of creation

In ancient Mesopotamia the Mother Goddess plays a significant role in creation, The Sumerian Nammu, a personification of the primeval sea, creates Heaven and Earth. The Babylonian version of Nammu is Tiamat, who, before she becomes the monstrous enemy of the patriarchal god Marduk, is the mother of the gods, and it was the goddess Mami (Ninhursag) who created humans. The

same Ninhursag created humans in the Assyrian theology. The prehistoric Egyptian goddess Nun created the world out of herself, as did the Polynesian Great Mother and the Bon Klu Queen. The Aztec goddess Coatlicue was the mother of the gods, including the great Quetzalcoatl. The world sprang from the Great Mother, Kuma, of the Venezuelan Yaruro people. The Yolugu and Kakadu Aborigine of northern Australia tell of a Great Mother who was the primary creator in the dreaming process out of which their world grew. For the Yolugu, this goddess, Kunapipi, existed before all things. Her body is the earth itself. The Tantric believers of India say that the original creative power was female and that it was the Goddess who created the universe. For the Greeks this power was Earth, as Gaia or Eurynome.

The Chinese goddess Ngua created humans by dragging a cord through mud.



Aztec Statue of Coatlicue, Goddess of the Earth. (© Gianni Dagli Orti/CORBIS)

The creation of humans falls to many goddesses, who tend to work in the absence of their spouses. The Indonesian Batak goddess Si Boru Deak created the earth on the back of a serpent and then became the mother of humanity. The creator's daughter in Truk Island of the South Pacific created humans, animals and plants. The Mesoamerican Zapotec goddess, Huichaana, created people and fish. The Indian Dyak Jata created some of the world, as did the African Fon goddess, Mawa, the Anatolian Mother Goddess, and the Japanese Mother goddess Izanami.

In many cultures the Goddess is the mother of all things. The Great African Ijaw goddess, Woyengi, came down to Earth and created from the Creation Stone. The gods of the Irish, the Tuatha de Danann, were the children of Dana, the Mother Goddess. The South American Kakabu goddess is "the mother of all that is."

As is clear from the world parent myths (*See* Part I; World Parent Creation), the Mother is often plagued by the never-ending amorous desires of the Sky Father and must be released by her children so that she can have room to become the productive Earth. In earth-diver myths (*See* Part I; Earth-Diver Creation), she is both the primeval maternal waters out of which the creative germ of earth will be retrieved, and the Sky Woman with creative power who falls to Earth from the sky. In emergence myths (*See* Part I; Emergence Creation), she is the universal body out of which the people are born, as well as the goddess-midwife who leads them out of the darkness. For early people of all parts of the world, the earth itself was the mother who produced

the necessities of life, even as women produced the children who would make possible the survival of the species.

IMPERFECT OR ACCIDENTAL CREATION

For a variety of reasons, all creations can be called imperfect. Creation myths mirror the imperfections of humanity, of nature, of life itself. Often the imperfections are blamed on human weakness (*See* Fall from Grace in Creation), but certain creation myths seem to attribute at least a part of the imperfection of creation to the creator himself; his negligence, his misjudgments, his misplaced trust, or simply his lack of talent as a creator.

Imperfect creation stories take a variety of forms. In some cases the creator simply makes a mistake and has to begin again. The Andean Aymaran creator made the mistake of creating giants, who were arrogant, and he had to destroy them before he could create people. The California Wyot Old Man discovered that he had created the wrong kind of people and had to destroy them before trying again. The African Fulani god made people who were so arrogant that he had to blind them. Sometimes the creator is simply not good at what he does. The Bagobo creator made people with no noses and when his brother tried to correct things, the people came out with upside down noses and severely limited intelligence. The creator of the Californian Pomo people tried several times to make humans and several times had to destroy them before he hit upon the correct method. The same was true of the Mesoamerican Mayan creators, whose humans made of clay and then of wood had to be destroyed or turned into monkeys. The creator of the Joshua tribe in Oregon created humans by a hit or miss method and finally had to request help from a friend. The Mande god in Mali made a kind of seed that did not work well and foreshadowed the devil-like Pemba, who undermined the creative work of his twin, Faro. The Arizonan Yuma creation is undermined by the struggle between twin creators.

Often the creator places undue trust in an assistant who is, in effect or fact, a devil, or, at least, a mischievous trickster (*See* Devil in Creation). The Mongolian creator is negligent by his absence, thus allowing the devil to corrupt his newly formed humans. The Romanian creator allows a mole to make Earth the wrong size while he sleeps. The Solomon Islands San Cristobal god allows his devil-like brother to assist him and the result is poisonous fruit. In California, the Maidu creator allowed himself to be assisted by the trickster Coyote, who, with his dog, Rattlesnake, introduced death into the world. The South American Guarani Sun-creator allowed the less competent Moon to help him and was forced to make major repairs due to the Moon's mistakes. The Baluba creator's powers are threatened by a devil figure who claims to have created himself.

The creator can be simply irresponsible or he can create merely by chance. The Sumerian gods made humans during a drunken party and the results were predictable. The African Boshongo god vomited up a troublesome creation. The

Inuit Inupiat Raven's first creation—in his own image—was a violent devil character that had to be thrown into the abyss.

In short, in these myths the imperfections of creation are contained *within* the creator. An implication here is that imperfection is somehow necessary, that life without imperfection—death and pain, for instance—would not be life.

INCEST IN CREATION

Incest is a common motif in creation myths. That this should be so is not altogether surprising, as the creator (or the first male or female) is limited in the choice of a mate for the necessary procreation of humanity. At the same time, the taboo against incest is so powerful and so universal, that incest, however necessary, is sometimes punished and is sometimes blamed for the problems of the world.

Incest stories within creation myths are typically of two kinds. Incest occurs among the gods in the context of the cosmic creation, or it occurs between beings who become the first parents of humanity or of a given culture.

The cosmic myths are the most ancient. In Egypt, Atum produced Shu (Air) and Tefnut (Water) from his semen or saliva. Shu and Tefnut mated—that is to say, combined, to produce two offspring, Geb (Earth) and his sister Nut (Sky). This brother and sister pair produced much of creation, including the most famous Egyptian deities, Osiris and his sister-wife Isis. These incestuous relationships were reflected in the traditional mating of Egyptian pharaohs with their sisters. In ancient Greece, too, incest appears at the earliest stages of the creation myth. The son of Gaia (Earth) and Ouranos (Heavens) is Kronos (Sky-Time), who rapes his sister Rhea (Earth) and produces the Olympian family, led by Zeus, whose wife was his sister Hera and the whose children—Ares and Aphrodite, for example—were not averse to intra-family sexual relationships. In neither of these traditions is there a sense that divine incest is wrong. In fact, it could be argued that the incest was a necessary aspect of the process of creation, since the first families in both cases were the only families.

The Lugbara people of Uganda tell of a sister-brother incestuous relationship that resulted in creation. The Luiseño of California say that the Void gave birth to First Man (Sky) and First Woman (Earth) and that a relationship between the brother and sister resulted in creation. The Australian Yolugu Djanggawul brother and sisters created the world by way of incest, as did the Inca first man and his sister-wife, and the African Dogon divine brother and sister and, according to some, the Native American Acoma goddess and her nephew.

In the *Vedas* and *Brahmanas,* the ancient religious texts of India, incest is not always so easily tolerated, even when it is practiced by the gods. In the *Rig Veda*, the phallus of the primal male force reaches down to his daughter Earth and thus initiates creation. But in the later *Aitareya Brahmana,* the creator as Prajapati takes the form of a stag and mounts his daughter, who takes the form of a doe. In this case, the gods, led by Rudra-Shiva, punish the creator for having committed the sin of incest. In the pre-Zoroastrian

myths of Persia (Iran), as well, the god Yima and his sister are punished for their sin of incest.

Other cultures blame incest on the part of divine beings for earthly problems. A son of the Andean Jivaro gods, Ahimbi, commits incest with his mother, causing the troubles we have faced on Earth forever after. The African Mande blame the incestuous act of the evil twin Pemba with his mother's placenta for the impurity of the world. The Ngombe tribe of Central Africa tell how the world has been cursed because of an incestuous relationship between the son and daughter of the goddess Mbokomu.



Instead of the newborn Zeus, Rhea hands a stone to Kronos sitting on a throne. Relief from the base of a marble statue (second century C.E.). (Erich Lessing / Art Resource, NY)

In many cases it is incest that leads directly to the creation of humans. For many Polynesians, humans were the result of incest between the god Tane and his daughter. A similar relationship was said to have produced the Wahungwe people of Zimbabwe. The Yaruro tribe of Venezuela were said to have sprung from a relationship between the son and daughter of a goddess.

Ultimately, the incest motif seems to be less about the breaking of a taboo and more about the interjection of the divine into the world and a necessary creative commingling of elements represented by the incestuous pairs. Sexuality in mythology can be used both for prurient and philosophical as well as religious purposes.

ORIGIN OF EVIL IN CREATION

It should be noted that all creation myths that stress the role of a devil or devil-trickster in creation, as well as those that are concerned with the origin of death, the fall from grace, or duality in creation are directly related to the question of the origin of evil (*See* Death Origin in Creation; Devil in Creation; Duality in Creation; Fall from Grace; Trickster in Creation). In fact, it is a rare creation myth that does not concern itself at some point with the origin of evil. This makes perfect sense, because creation myths explain the origins of evident aspects of the human condition.

There are a few examples of creation myths that concern themselves more specifically than others with the question of the origin of evil. In the Central Asian Buriat myth the devil asks the creator for permission to plant his staff in the ground. The creator agrees, but from the hole made by the staff all of the evil things of life emerge. The myth of the Native American Creek tribe tells the sad tale of how animals once talked with and protected humans until humans began killing them and using them for food and clothing. Nothing was ever the same after that and evil came into being. The Native American Maidu say that evil began when the trickster Coyote lied to the creator. For the African Wahungwe it was human disobedience towards the creator that opened the gates for evil. (*See* Part IV; Pandora).

PRIMORDIAL WATERS IN CREATION

The existence of primordial waters that cover everything is common to most creation from chaos and all earth-diver creation myths. It exists in the other types of creation myths as well. There are several reasons for the ubiquity of this motif. All cultures naturally recognize water as a necessary source of life and survival, making it a useful symbol of creative fertility. Large masses of water are uncontrollable and, therefore, aptly representative of chaos. In tandem these two symbolic functions lead us to the idea of potential, as yet unformed creation. Perhaps most important, the waters speak to the larger metaphor of creation as birth. We are born of the maternal waters and so, in these myths, is creation itself.

In the earth-diver myths the maternal idea is clearly expressed. In Central Asia

the Altaic, Buriat, and Mongolian myths involve a diver, sometimes the devil, sent by the creator to the depths of the waters to find soil with which to begin the creation of Earth. In Native North America this motif is preserved and the figure of the Woman Who Falls from the Sky (*See* Sky Woman Descends) is added. The creation myths of the Cherokee, the Huron, and the Iroquois tribes—the Mohawk, the Onondagan, the Seneca, and the Tuscarora, for example—all contain this element, emphasizing the female character of the myth. The Woman Who Falls from the Sky becomes the initiator of the dive, the de facto midwife of creation. An insignificant and small animal—a toad or a muskrat, for instance—succeeds, after much difficulty, in penetrating the waters, like the lonely sperm that penetrates the egg, and brings back the fertilizing germ of creation; a tiny bit of earth, a fetus to be nurtured. Out of this small beginning the Sky Woman—now Earth Mother—directs the process of creation and civilization. Other Native Americans and cultures in other parts of the world also have earth-diver myths involving the primordial waters. In Anishinabe and Assiniboine myths Muskrat brings up the dirt. In the Arapaho myth it is Turtle. For the Yokut it is the mud hen, for the Yuchi the crawfish. In India the Garo people say it was Beetle who succeeded in the dive. The Gond people say that the creator, sitting on a lotus leaf on the waters, sent the crow to find the seed of life. The Birhor creator also sits on the lotus, by means of which he himself has emerged from the waters, and he sends the lowly leech to find the germ of creation. In a Hungarian myth the sun takes the form of a duck and makes the successful dive for the seed. A Romanian myth says that Satan made the dive, implying the essence of evil in creation from the beginning.

An interesting take on the maternal waters and birth theme occurs in a Polynesian myth of Samoa, in which the creator lived in a cosmic egg and broke out, thus allowing parts of the shell to fertilize the primordial waters, causing the formation of the Samoan Islands. Some Samoans say that the creator himself dove to the depths to find the stone that would form the basis of creation. The Finns, too, make use of the motif of the egg-waters combination. In that case the raised knee of a goddess floating on the waters serves as a nesting place for a bird's eggs. When the eggs fall into the water and break, creation is the result. An egg in the sea myth also exists in the *Satapatha Brahmana* of India. Here the maternal primordial sea itself longs to reproduce and gives birth to a golden egg, out of which emerges Prajapati, the creator. Primal waters in a Tuamotuan myth of Polynesia also are moved by a reproductive urge that leads to creation. A myth of the Papago of Arizona tells how in the beginning darkness rubbed with the primordial waters and so impregnated her/them with the first human. A Mongolian myth relates how the creator simply stirred the waters—perhaps a veiled image of intercourse—and filled them with creation.

In many cases the primordial waters become the birth waters in an even more specific manner. The Birhor creator emerges from the waters, the Native American Achomawi creators emerge from mist and clouds emanating from the waters, and in an actual emergence myth, the Jicarilla Apache first people have to

push the earth-covering waters aside as they emerge from the underworld. In a literal birth of a nation tale, a Tibetan Bon myth describes the forceful emergence from the waters of the Tibetan nation from their former world under the waters.

Still more explicit as a female-based maternal water birth myth is one of the most ancient creation myths we have. An ancient Egyptian myth depicts the primordial waters as the goddess Nun, who herself gave birth to everything that exists. The Zuni of the American Southwest tell how the creator made himself into a seed and threw himself into the maternal waters (the Earth Mother), thus impregnating her with creation. The ancient Sumerians of Mesopotamia (Iraq) saw the primordial waters as female and believed that it was the god Enki who powerfully divided the chaotic waters into the more orderly and useful Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. The Babylonians who followed them saw the waters as the chaotic and dangerous goddess Tiamat, whom the hero-god Marduk would kill and use as the basis of creation. The Aztecs of Mesoamerica also had a primeval chaotic goddess who floated on the waters devouring everything in her path. Male power, represented by two gods, killed her and also used her body parts for creation.

In many cases it is simply a case of the waters being the obvious place to start with creation. The Ainu creator creates on the back of a fish in the waters. The Indonesian Batak creator used the back of a serpent in the waters. The Native American Thompson creator started things by throwing some of his hair into the waters as the fertilizing agent. The Turkic creator simply flew over the waters, which represented Time, and created.

No motif is more common in creation myths than the primordial waters. Without them, the myths reveal and modern evolutionary science would agree, there could be no life.

RAVEN IN CREATION

Raven might be said to be the Coyote of parts of Siberia, Alaska, and the Pacific Northwest. He is at once a creator and a mischievous and often dangerous, highly self-centered trickster (*See* Trickster in Creation) who can change shapes and who follows the directions of his strong appetites even as he sometimes behaves as a pseudo-culture hero for humanity. The creation stories involving Raven are almost always funny and almost always outrageous. Like most tricksters, Raven is, at best, amoral.

Among the Chukchee of eastern Siberia, Raven was the "self-created," whose wife produced featherless humans and challenged him to participate in the creative process. This he did in trickster fashion, by defecating and urinating the world into being and by teaching humans how to copulate. The Inupiat of Alaska also have myths of Raven as a self-created creator. In this case Raven "became aware of himself," and in his loneliness created the world and humans out of clay or seed pods, and also made the heavenly bodies. The Inupiat Raven is not as trickster-like as the much more comic Chukchee version. The Kukulik Inuit of St. Lawrence Island in the Bering Sea off Alaska say Raven made the

world and that he acted as an earth-diver (*See* Earth-Diver Creation) to find sand with which to work. The pebbles in that sand he made into humans.

In many Alaskan myths Raven is the trickster of tricksters, who cheats and steals his way to creative preeminence. In the cases of the Kodiak, Tlingit, Tsimshian, and Haida mythologies, for instance, he steals the sun to bring light to the people—much as the Greek Prometheus stole fire in Greek mythology. But Raven is much less altruistic than Prometheus; he always pleases himself.

As a creator, Raven is always colorful. He created Queen Charlotte Island for the Haida people by flying over a tiny island and commanding it to be Earth. The island complies, and Raven cuts it into a small piece—Queen Charlotte Island—and a large piece—the rest of the world. The Kodiak raven caused a bladder containing a man and a woman to come down from the sky. Their movement attempting to leave the bladder led to much of the created world. The Tlingit Raven and the Tsimshian Raven trick the high god and make his daughter pregnant to further their creative activities. Further down the coast, in California, Raven plays a more serious but less dominant role in the creation myths of the Yokut and Salinan.

The amorality and trickster aspects of the Raven creator speaks to a sense that creation from the beginning is both



Raven, *by John Frazer Mills. (Library of Congress)*

imperfect and marked by duality. Raven is almost always comic and he does create. Often, however, he feels like a close relative of the ubiquitous devil figure who assists and undermines so many central Asian creators (*See* Devil in Creation).

SACRIFICE IN CREATION

Many myths involving the killing or maiming of a world parent (*See* Part I; World Parent Creation) in the course of separating the parent (*See* Separation of Heaven and Earth in Creation) can reasonably be called myths of sacrifice. The same is true of the many dismemberment myths (*See* Dismemberment of Primordial Being in Creation) in which parts of a dismembered being are transformed into parts of the universe and world. However, a particular theme in certain creation myths involves the willing sacrifice of an apparently insignificant being or of a highly significant being in order that creation might take place. In separation and dismemberment myths the victim is usually overcome as an antagonist rather than as a willingly productive sacrificial victim.

The Anishinabe, Cherokee, and Huron in North America all tell earth-diver myths in which lowly animals die making the heroic and dangerous dive into the primordial waters to bring up the soil that will form the germ of world creation. The Penobscot Corn Mother saves her people by demanding that she be sacrificed so that she may be buried and return as much-needed corn. The Ceramese Hainuwele, although not perhaps as willing a victim as Corn Mother, is sacrificed without resistance and is planted in sacred ground only to return as the staple Ceramese food. The Oqomiut Sedna is a victim, as is Jesus in the Christian tradition; after his death he serves his people as the new fruit on a new Tree of Knowledge in what Christians see as a new creation. In the African Mande tradition a good twin, Faro, is sacrificed to atone for the sins of his evil brother, Pemba, thus allowing creation to proceed. The Tonga of Africa tell the sad myth of two gods fighting over a child and finally sacrificing him so that he becomes the sun and moon.

In some creation myths the gods sacrifice themselves. This is the case particularly in Mesopotamia, where the first humans, according to the Babylonians, were created by the goddess Mami out of the clay of Earth and the blood of sacrificed gods. The Assyrians in the same area had a similar myth of human creation.

Finally, in some traditions the concept of the sacrifice of a primal man lies at the very center of complex concepts of creation. In the *Vedas,* the oldest of the sacred texts of India, the first man, Purusha, who is an embodiment of Brahman, the divine essence of the universe, must be sacrificed to form the universe. The first-created Pangu of the Chinese creation myth performs a similar sacrificial role.

That sacrifice should be so central to creation is evident when we consider that created entities are always made of other entities if they do not come ex nihilo from the creator's mind. To make a house we must cut down trees or dig up mud to make bricks. To raise vegetables we must bury seeds and cut down plants and bury

seeds again. To have life we must also have death.

SEPARATION OF HEAVEN AND EARTH IN CREATION

One of the most widespread motifs in creation myths is that of the separation of Heaven (or Sky) and Earth. The motif is related to the birth metaphor in creation in that the separation is necessitated by the otherwise never-ending coital connection between the primordial father and primordial mother—Father Sky and Mother Earth (*See* Part I; World Parent Creation), a connection that produces the pregnancy that ends in the creation of the world's creatures and elements. The reason the parental offspring long for and perpetrate the separation—if, as in the case of the Dhammai of India and the Diegeños of California, for instance, the parents do not initiate it themselves—is that the union of Heaven and Earth leaves no room for growth and development of those trapped in the darkness between them. So it is that the offspring typically do something to make their parents separate. The separation can be violent. There can be a dismemberment in which the earth and sky as we know them—below and above—are created, or there can be a determined action on the part of one or more offspring to force the parents away from each other. To put it in other terms, the seemingly eternal union of Heaven and Earth is representative of Chaos—a state of potential creation waiting to be activated. Until there is room between them, creation cannot proceed in a truly productive manner. Without the separation, new light cannot penetrate the old darkness. The Romans believed that the separation of Heaven and Earth by a natural force—a god—resulted in harmony as opposed to chaos.

As described by Hesiod in ancient Greece, the first mother—the personification of Earth—gave birth to Ouranos, the personification of Sky, who covered his mother (and now wife) so totally as to lead the couple's son, Kronos (Time) to castrate his father, thus permanently separating Heaven and Earth. That Kronos (now Heaven) and his sister-wife Rhea (now Earth) would themselves have to be separated by their son Zeus and his fellow Olympians, is simply a reinforcement of the motif. The continental Celts told a similar tale of the union of Heaven and Earth that ends when the father is castrated by the son. These tales have obvious special importance to those who subscribe to Sigmund Freud's Oedipal theory involving the instinctive rivalry of father and son and his theory of the supposedly dangerous primal scene, the witnessing by a child of the sexual intercourse of parents.

There are many means by which the primordial parents separate or are separated. In the creation myth of the Krachi of Africa, the god Wulbari (Heaven) rests so firmly on Asase Ya (Earth) that their human offspring are nearly smothered. It is the constant squirming that sends the father up and away from Earth. Finally there is room to breathe and to be creative. The Maori and other Polynesian peoples say that Rangi (Sky Father) and Papa (Earth Mother) clung together so tightly that their children, led by a son, had no choice but to force them apart. In one myth it is the god of forests who

forces the parents apart by standing on his head and using his feet for the necessary separation leverage. The parents experience agony and howl as they are forced apart. The Snohomish of Northwestern North America tell how the people were constantly banging their heads against the sky so the various tribes got together and used trees to push the sky up from the earth. The Melanesian Solomon Island first beings had the job of separating Heaven and Earth so that further creation could take place. A son separates his parents, Heaven and Earth, in the Micronesian Mariana Islands myth. In Mongolia, the creator, Udan, separates Heaven and Earth with 99 golden columns so that more creation can take place. The Mosetene creator in Bolivia had a huge serpent preserve the separation of Heaven and Earth. For the son of the New Hebrides Melanesian creator it is an eel that is used. The Vietnam giant Khong raises the sky from the earth with his head and then places a pillar between the two. In Mesoamerica the Mayan Feathered Serpent and the god Tepeu use their immense power to separated Heaven and Earth

In ancient Egypt the elements of the story are somewhat reversed. It is Shu (Air) the father of Geb (Earth—the male) and Nut (Heaven—the female) who forces his constantly conjoined children apart, leaving Geb in a constant state of longing for his sister-wife. In India the primal male force of Heaven mates with the primal female force of Earth and then simply withdraws. The Papago Sky behaves in the same way. The Navajo Father Sky and Earth Mother slam together and then separate, thus producing Coyote and Badger. The Southwestern American Zuni Sky Father and Earth Mother came together for creation, but soon after the Mother pulled away and relaxed in comfort, partly submerged in the primordial sea.

In some cases a chaotic state of oneness is simply separated into Heaven and Earth, the basic principles on which an ordered creation is built. In the Nigerian Ekoi myth two creators are joined until they voluntarily withdraw from each other to form Sky and Earth. The Micronesian Gilbert Islands creator makes Heaven and Earth by breaking apart the sea shell in which he himself has germinated. The Hebrew creator of the Bible separates Heaven from Earth as he separates Day from Night. Such differentiation makes the further differentiation of creation possible. So it is in the Japanese myth that the joined Heaven and Earth have to be separated into *In* and *Yo* (*Yin* and *Yang*) so that the necessary opposites—active and passive, male and female, represented by the deities Izanami and Izanagi, may proceed with creative acts. The ancient Sumerian god Enlil simply separated *Anki* (the Universe) into *An* (Heaven) and *Ki* (Earth).

In a few cases, when Heaven and Earth threaten to marry, the gods prevent it to preserve differentiation as opposed to the chaotic mess of Heaven and Earth as one entity. In India the Gond and Minyong peoples both have such myths.

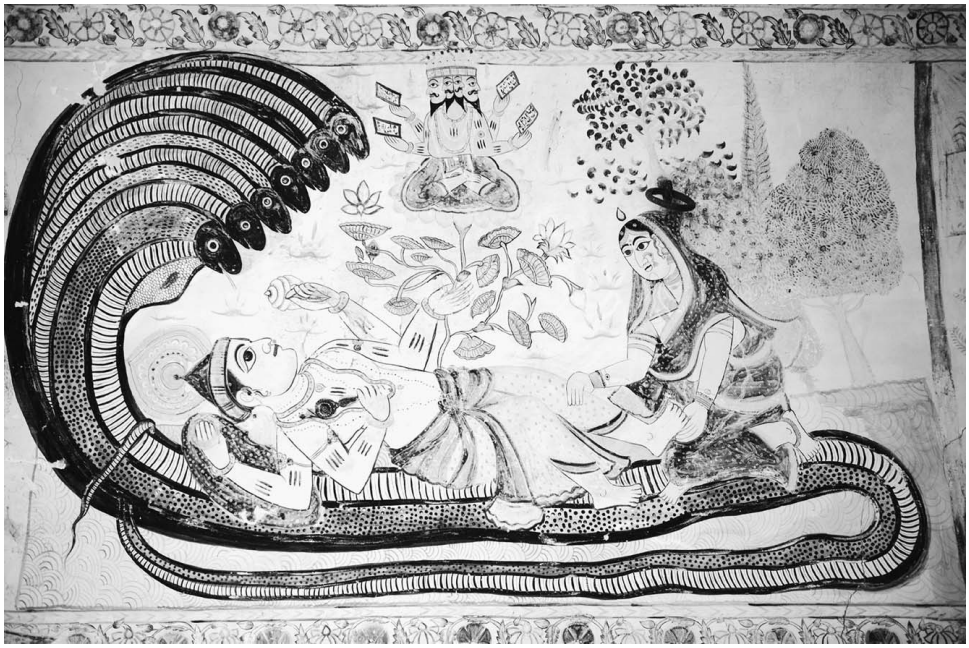
SEXUAL IMPULSE IN CREATION

Inasmuch as creation myths frequently make implicit or explicit metaphorical use

of the procreative process—especially emphasizing the connection between birth and creation (*See* Birth as Creation Metaphor)—it is not surprising that we find frequent expressions of the impulse that initiates that process. In human procreation, desire leads to intercourse, intercourse to pregnancy and pregnancy to birth. In many creation myths the same process results in creation itself whether by emergence from Mother Earth or the sexual union of world parents.

The sexual impulse is central to all separation of heaven and earth myths (*See* Separation of Heaven and Earth in Creation). Typically the impulse is so strong that Father Sky and Mother Earth must be separated so that creation will not be limited to their immediate offspring. In many other creation myths the sexual impulse—the initiation of creation—is centered in the male principle, whatever form it takes. Usually that form is a dominant male deity. The American Maidu and the South Pacific New Hebrides creators were alone and desired something, so they created women. The ancient Egyptian god Atum initiated creation by masturbation—a logical expression of the procreative metaphor, since he was alone in a void. His act resulted in, among others, the Heaven and Earth deities, Geb and Nut. In the ancient *Rig Veda* of India the "Phallus of Heaven" has a strong desire and "reaches out" to its daughter, Earth, and impregnates her. The Persian god Yima uses his "golden arrow" to impregnate Earth. In India the *Aitareya Brahmana*, the passion of the creator Prajapati, drives him to take the form of a stag so that he can have intercourse with his daughter, who takes the form of a female of the same species so that she can receive him. A stag god and a stag goddess also are driven together by sexual impulse in the Mayan *Popol Vuh*. In Greece the god Kronos continues the procreative/creation process initiated by his parents by raping his sister Rhea (Earth) who gives birth to the Olympians. Rape also occurs in the Andean Jivaro myth of South America. In a Gnostic myth the embodiment of grace and silence, Charis, creates sexual impulse in the father, Autopater, and their offspring are Truth and the first human. The Polynesian Tane mates with his daughter, who gives birth to the first male, Tiki. The incest (*See* Incest in Creation Myths) that occurs in many of these cases is logical because the only mates available at this stage of creation are immediate relatives. Incestuous desire leads to creation among the Wyot of California, the Yaruro of Venezuela, and plays a role on the Navajo creation as well.

More often than not, creation is the result of what is depicted as the sexual impulse in the normal relationship between husband and wife. In ancient Sumer the attraction is the irresistible one between different kinds of waters, leading to order and creation. The Zuni creator made Sky Father and Earth Mother in the primordial waters and they, in turn, came together to create the world, In India the Dhammai creator makes love with his wife and Earth and Sky are born. The Anatolian Storm God creates in union with his natural mate, Mother Earth. In their creation myth, the Luiseño of California, Earth and Sky are attracted to each



Mural painting of the Lakshminarayan Temple. Representation of the God Vishnu and Goddess Lakshmi on Shesha, king of all Nagas. (© Frédéric Soltan/Sygma/Corbis)

other and their union results in creation. The Northeast American Penobscot First Mother mates with Helper-of-All and gives birth to the first people. The first Kikuyu people are born of a happy relationship between the culture hero Gikuyu and the beautiful Mumbi ("She who Creates"). The Wahungwe, also of Africa, say that the creator sent First Man a beautiful woman and that their mutual attraction led to further creation.

Various common relationship and sexual impulse problems experienced by humans, in addition to such extreme examples as rape and incest, are reflected in many creation myths. Jealousy plays an important role in the North American Kiowa myth. The outsmarting of an unsympathetic father resulting in elopement is a motif in the African Kano myth, in which a culture hero elopes with the creator's daughter. The creator in this case is "Death." The Lapp son of the Sun elopes with the daughter of the monstrous blind giant. In some cases the sexual impulse between two lovers is considered to be dangerous and their union is prevented. This is the case when Earth and Sky try to mate in the Indian Minyong myth. There are cases, too, of resistance between would-be lovers. The Navajo first women, in their anger at the first men, separate themselves from them, only to be drawn back to them eventually by sexual desire. The Australian Ngurunderi creator creates even as he wanders in pursuit of his runaway wives. The North American Pawnee Evening Star is enamored of Morning Star

but must go through a process of seduction before he can win her. The California Yana people tell a story of thwarted desire that finally ends in consummation.

Reflecting the cultural mores of the groups telling the given creation myths, certain patterns and rituals are sometimes associated with the desire expressed in the myths. In Japan, the god Izanagi ("He who Invites") and his wife Izanami ("She who Invites") are strongly attracted to each other, making possible the complex and sometimes tragic creation they bring about. But first they must learn the proper rituals of male-female contact and marriage. The Crow Indian trickster/creator Coyote makes males and females and teaches them the sexual impulse and its use. The culture hero Kokomaht performs the same service for the Yuma tribe of Arizona. The Tantric goddess Kali in India teaches the god Mahakala the joys of procreation and gives birth to humanity. In some cases, as in the African Efik myth, the people disobey the creator's restrictions on the expression of the sexual impulse, reflecting common human difficulties with sexual morality.

Genitals play an obvious role in the procreative process and are frequently featured in creation myths. In a Dogon myth the creator, driven by his strong sexual and creative impulse, is prevented from having intercourse with Mother Earth by her enlarged clitoris, leading to an act that explains the ritual tradition of female circumcision. Similar explanations are implied in the myths of several Australian Aborigine groups, such as the Yolugu in whose myth the Djanggawal brother and his sister dreamer-creators, driven by desire, have such large genitals that they have to drag them along the ground until various adjustments can be made. Exaggerated genitalia emphasize the importance of sexual desire in the creative process, as in the case of the endless phallus of the great Indian god Shiva, or the Australian Kakadu dreamer-creator, whose giant penis fills the Earth Mother with the seeds of creation.

At the basis of all of these stories is a recognition of the creative, and sometimes destructive, power of the sexual impulse and a natural tendency to associate that power with the power of the creative drive in nature and the cosmos.

SHAMANISM AND CREATION

Shamanism is particularly present in Siberia and Central Asia and among the indigenous peoples of Native North and South America. Shamans are, in a sense, religious magicians, who typically have power over fire and are capable of achieving trance states in séances in which their souls vacate their bodies in order to go on curing missions to the spirit worlds above or below the earth. Shamans can change shapes and they have close relationships with the spirits of the animistic cultures in which they tend to thrive.

As shape shifters, shamans resemble tricksters and, like tricksters, sometimes are active in creation myths. Raven, as the Central Asian Chukchee creator, is such a figure, as is the Tungus trickster-

creator. Among California tribes such as the Pomo and the Yana, shamans play creative roles, as does the shamanistic Kumu, the Venezuelan Yaruro creator.

Shamanistic creators sometimes sing creation into existence. The South Pacific New Hebrides creator sings a song to separate Heaven and Earth to make room for creation. Two Netsilik shamans, left alone in the world after a flood, turn one of themselves into a woman so that procreation can take place. Bon shaman-priests sing the creation myth at weddings to symbolize the re-creation that is marriage. Navajo shamans sing the creation myth at certain curing ceremonies—again, to symbolize re-creation.

SKY WOMAN DESCENDS

The Woman who falls from the sky—Sky Woman—is a major character in the earth-diver myths (*See* Part I; Earth-Diver Creation) of the Iroquois league of eastern North America and three other nations influenced by Iroquoian language and mythology. The former represented here are the Mohawk, the Onondaga, the Oneida, the Seneca, and the Tuscarora. The latter are the Cherokee, the Huron, and the Wyandot. The Kiowa, further west, also have a Sky Woman myth. The Batak of Indonesia also have one.

The Mohawk story concerns a female figure in the upper world where everything was perfect. The woman gives birth to Mother Earth (Aientsik) and is pushed through a hole left by an uprooted tree into the space between the heavens and the unformed world below. On her way she manages to grasp some plants—beans, squash, and corn, for instance. When the animals below see her coming, they use Turtle as her landing place. Sky Woman now becomes a culture hero and sends the animals to dive for soil at the bottom of the primordial waters. With the retrieved soil she forms the beginnings of Earth. In the new earth she plants the plants from above, staples of the Mohawk diet.

The other Iroquoian myths are essentially the same with a few variations, including sacred twins born to Sky Woman or her daughter after the fall to Earth. In the Onondagan myth the Sky Woman and her daughter both fall from the sky. And the daughter gives birth to twins—one good and one bad. The Oneida, Seneca, and Tuscarora myths also feature twins, as does the Huron myth. In the Wyandot myth Sky Woman adopts two brothers, who stand for the twins in the Iroquoian myths. The Cherokee myth is somewhat more animistic. The beans, corn, and squash come from her body and she also produces the spark of consciousness, which is the eternal flame present in Cherokee ceremonies.

The Sky Woman story has a dreamlike quality. The persona begins in a perfect world but somehow becomes pregnant, suggesting mortality and ambiguity. In effect, expelled from the perfect upper world, she—and/or her daughter—leave that world by way of a hole made by an uprooted tree—the symbol of life and fertility. This is an appropriate symbol for the process of creation, which is also birth from the upper world into the world below—our world. Sky Woman, with

gifts from the upper world in hand, floats dream-like down to the unformed lower world of the maternal primeval waters where the animals—mortal beings—await her (In the Kiowa myth she comes down by a rope). Turtle volunteers his services as a base, and the world from that point becomes Turtle Island. It is Sky Woman—now a de facto midwife of creation and culture hero (*See* Culture Hero in Creation)—who, in most cases, supervises the descent into the maternal waters to find potentially germinating soil, and it is she who supervises the growth of the world and the planting of food products. And it is she—or her daughter—who gives birth to the first people, the twins—one good, one bad, establishing the duality (*See* Duality in Creation) so basic to the world as we know it.

The fact that a female figure plays such an important role in the Iroquoian creation story is a reflection of a matrilineal culture in which women can be chiefs.

SUN IN CREATION

It is not surprising that the sun should play a significant role in creation myths around the world. People must have realized early on how important the sun was for survival. It was the sun that gave solidity to the earth and strength to the man, say the Lakota Sioux. Without its light and warmth, life would be impossible. With this understanding would have come a fascination with the movements of the sun—the path it took each day. When the sun disappeared in the evening there would, in all likelihood, have been a fear that it might not come back. Without light life always becomes more dangerous, and before the advent of artificial light and secure habitations this would have been especially true of night. In the ancient Toltec myth of Mesoamerica a series of creations, understandably, end when suns die. It must have been mysterious the way the sun seemed to appear in one of the four directions and to disappear in the opposite direction. How was that possible if the sun did not somehow journey into a world under our world—an underworld? So it was that the great Egyptian high god, in one sense the sun, the "eye of Heaven" made a perilous journey under the earth each night. The Banks Islanders tell of the creator sun god Quat's journey to bring darkness to the otherwise all-prevailing light, and his explanation of the importance of night and sleep. Whatever the explanation, phenomena such as the sun god Pachacamac of the South American Aymaran and Inca rising each morning out of Lake Titicaca were certainly worth worshipping.

Early thinkers would have naturally personified the sun as a god—more often than not as the creator or principle god. The Aztec sun god Huzipochtli was, like the Egyptian sun god Ra, a dominant creator god, as were the South American Muysca sun god and the African Boshongo sun-creator. In ancient Indian texts the sun was born from a cosmic egg, and "at his birth, everything rose toward him. The sun is Brahma," the creator. In Africa, the Malazoi king is worshipped as the creator sun's representative on Earth.

A further step in the personification process would have been an assumed

relationship between the immediately present nurturing entity, Earth—usually seen as the mother—and the distant but powerful nurturing entity, the Sun—usually seen as a father. The Sumu people are the children of Ma-Papan (Sun-Papa), conceived in Earth by his strong rays. The Lapp creators were Father Sun and Mother Earth; it was their son, Son of Sun, who continued the creative process. The South American Guarani speak of "Our Father" the sun, as do the North American Zuni. For many of the Native Americans of the sun-drenched southwest the sun was the sky-based father creator who had done his fertilizing work in the past and who left the details of creation to his earth-based mate. The Acoma creator and the Hopi Tawa were such gods. In the case of the Midwestern Osage people the creators were Father Sun and Mother Moon. In some emergence myths, such as those of several Apache groups, it was the sun, sometimes in his form as Killer of Enemies, who used his light to guide the people from the world under the earth or made it possible for them to survive in the world in which they now live. It was the light of the sun that allowed the Australian Arandan dreamer-creator to burst out of the earth. The eponymous Hungarian sun god Magyar took his light to the depths of existence as an earth-diver seeking the material for human creation.



In Japan's creation myth, Amaterasu, goddess of the sun, hid herself from the world in a cave when she felt herself insulted by her brother. To entice her out, the other gods performed a ribald dance to the sounds of much merriment. Amaterasu heard the commotion and was overcome with curiosity—she left her cave, bringing light back to the world. From the series Dai nippon meisho kagami, "Mirror of Famous Generals." (© Asian Art & Archaeology, Inc./CORBIS)

In some cases the sun god who dominates creation is female rather than male. The leader of the Japanese universe is the sun goddess Amaterasu. The Indian Minyong sun deity is a goddess, as is the Great Mother sun goddess of the Yuchi of Oklahoma; and the dominant deity of the American Cherokee is the sun goddess. In the latter case the goddess power reflects a matrilineal social arrangement.

As we modern people know, the sun can, of course, be dangerous. Many myths tell of the early sun god having to be moved a distance away from the earth before the people could survive its rays. The Alaskan Tsimshian people have a myth about the importance of adjusting

the sun's rays at the beginning of time. The Ipurina sun floods the world with boiling water.

THOUGHT-BASED CREATION

Of all the explanations of the beginning of creation, the concept of creation by thought perhaps makes the most sense to human beings. This is so because we all initiate creative acts primarily by thought. We are not particularly surprised, then, that the God of the Bible created from his own thoughts and words. Nor is the creative work of the Indian Brahman far-fetched in this sense. For many Hindus, as expressed, for instance, in the *Laws of Manu*, creation is the result of the thought of the all-encompassing Brahman: "the Self-Existent Brahman thought of the waters and they were." The same Brahman broke the cosmic egg (*See* Cosmic Egg in Creation) in two by thought and it became Heaven and Earth.

He thought of light and expressed the thought and there was light. And we are not surprised when the Mesoamerican Mayan myth tells us that the two creators sat together and whatever they thought came into existence, or that the Melanesian New Hebrides creator, Naareau, thought of humans and there they were, or that everything that is came from the mind of the North American Omaha Great Spirit or the Diegeños creator in California. When the Pomo Indian creator "filled villages with people of his thoughts," we picture a sculptor-like creator at work. Much the same picture arises when we are told in the North American Wyandot myth that Sky Woman "thinks she would like children" and the next day two sons arrive. The northeastern American Lenape creator made his visions come to life by thinking about each element of those visions. The Crow people of the American Plains have a myth, in which Coyote (*See* Coyote in Creation) as the creator wished for animal earth-divers and they immediately came into being. In an Achomawi myth of California, Coyote and Silver Fox think of a boat to float about on the waters and one comes into being. From this boat Silver Fox begins creating. The Hopi deities Tawa and Spider Woman had "the great thought" that the world should be arranged, and that thought became the creation songs out of which creation itself emerged. In the same way the creation by thought of the Maori creator of New Zealand is described in ritual song containing these words: "From the conception the increase,/From the increase the thought,/ From the thought the remembrance," and from the remembrance, creation itself. These are all images that speak to the human creative process expressed most evidently in the arts.

In some creation myths, the creative process sometimes takes place in dreams of one kind or another. The South East Asian Negritos tell how a divine couple came to Earth and then dreamed children into existence. The Colombian Uitoto Creator, "Father with an Illusion," dreams and thinks the world into existence. This process is reminiscent of the Australian dreaming creation as expressed, for instance, in the myth of the Arandan

creator whose dream-thoughts became real and emerged as concrete forms from his body, or that of the Yolugu Djanggawul ancestors whose thoughts became real places and objects.

In other creation by thought myths the world exists and the creator sends a son, daughter, or protégé to Earth to continue the process of creation. In the Acoma and Laguna myths of the southwest region of what is now the United States, there is a distant creator who sends Thinking Woman to Earth to direct the development of life there. Her name makes evident the role of thought in her work. The Arapaho of the Great Plains say that Flat Pipe, sent by the Great Spirit, floated on the primordial waters and thought of animals he needed for a dive into the waters to find mud with which to make the earth.

The creator in several ex nihilo creation myths (*See* Part I; Ex Nihilo Creation), alone in the Void, seems to awaken from unconsciousness to consciousness and then literally conceives creation in his mind. The creator who awakens into consciousness from unconsciousness is a logical if complex metaphorical continuance of the birth metaphor in creation myths (*See* Birth as Creation Metaphor). We perhaps relate to the process because in some profound sense we have experienced it. The creator in this case is like the human child awakening to consciousness in early babyhood and in some sense registering, and thus making real, the surrounding world in its thoughts. In Micronesia the Mariana Islands creator, Na Areau, awoke to a thought that came from himself into his mind, and creation came about. Also in the South Pacific, the Polynesian Tuamotuan people say that in the beginning Kiho the creator was alone in the Void, only accompanied by his "Activating Self." Kino began to think of things and called on his Activating Self to make them concrete. In the same way the Native American Winnebago creator, Earth Maker, suddenly came to consciousness of himself and thought things into existence. The original southwestern American Zuni creator, Awonawilona, conceived of himself by thought, suggesting a metaphor for our own role in creation—namely that we are here to make creation conscious of itself. The powerful thoughts of the creators suggest the potential of our own minds.

TRICKSTER IN CREATION

The trickster in world mythology is a complex figure who combines a creative nature with a destructive one. He is, for the most part, amoral and driven by voracious appetites. He challenges authority even as he pretends to honor it. He is a thief by nature. He is sometimes a comic figure who makes a fool of himself. He is mischievous but also capable of real violence. In short, he is a reflection of the conflicted nature of the human psyche untempered by morality. The trickster can change shapes at will and he can cross boundaries, like his relative the shaman, between our world and that of spirits. He is most popular among the animistic cultures of North America, Central Asia, and Africa, but he exists in

most parts of the world. His role in creation myths varies. He is sometimes the creator, sometimes the assistant to the creator; sometimes he is indistinguishable from the devil that undermines the creator's work.

It should be noted that there are cases wherein figures such as Coyote and Raven who, in Native American culture are usually tricksters, being true creators or creator assistants with no apparent mischief in mind. The creation myths of the Papago of Arizona and the Miwok and Cupeño of California are examples of this. The trickster can sometimes use his special powers by acting as a culture hero (*See* Culture Heroes in Creation). The Great Hare of the Anishinabe and other Great lakes cultures, Nanabozho, is such a figure. Kumush, the Modoc creator in the Pacific Northwest, can work for his people in the spirit world.

More often, even when such figures intend to be purely creative, they do their work in trickster-like ways that sometimes border on the perverse. The Siberian Chukchee Raven trickster is reluctant when his wife asks him to create something. He appears to be somewhat lazy and his children laugh at his funny Raven costume. When he does create aspects of the world he does so by defecating and urinating. Among the Alaskan Kodiak, Raven creates a woman and she plays the trickster role, creating by spitting and urinating. The Alaskan Kukulik Raven creates a village by squeezing the water out of a ball of sand. In British Columbia the Kootenay Raven creator uses a ball of old grease to make the sun. The Achomawi of northern California say that the trickster Coyote "assisted" the creator, Silver Fox, mainly by sleeping and then eating.

As a thief, the trickster is always clever, and sometimes his thievery is in the interest of his human companions Among the Tlingit and Tsimshian peoples of Alaska the story is told of the trickster Raven stealing light from the world above and making the daughter of the House of Light (the Sun) pregnant through a bit of trickery. The Raven of the British Columbia Haida is a comic figure who, nevertheless, succeeds in stealing the sun for the people. Iktome, a popular trickster of the Great Plains, kills Frog for arguing with him in the Assiniboine myth but he sends animals to dive for earth-starting mud and teaches the people how to steal horses. The Navajo Coyote steals the daughter of Water Monster and causes a terrible flood.

In Central Asia the trickster is usually indistinguishable from a devil. His role is, typically, to cheat the creator and undermine his creation, especially his creation of humans. In this he resembles the biblical Satan, who changes his form into that of the serpent and undermines Yahweh's creation by corrupting Adam and Eve. The Buriat, Altaic, Siberian-Tartar, Turkic, Samoyed, and Mongolian creators are all tricked by devil/tricksters that instill sinful ways into the newly created humanity by spitting on them or otherwise insulting the creator's work. In many cases these devil figures have been taken on by the creator as creative assistants, indicating a sense that duality has been present in the world from the beginning.

Creators elsewhere are plagued by corrupting tricksters. The Ainu creator in Japan is undermined by a trickster who steals the sun and tries to swallow it. The Algonquin culture hero Glooskap must struggle against the inherent evil of his brother Malsum. The California Yokut assistant creator Coyote manages to escape to Heaven even though the creator instructs him to remain on Earth. The Western American Ute creator, the Manitou, is constantly bothered by Coyote's tricks. In the American Northwest the Okanagan creator, Old One, sent Coyote to make things right with his people on Earth, but instead Coyote divided them into several tribes with different languages so that they had difficulty communicating. The Arizonan Pima creator, Earth-Maker, is bothered by his assistant Coyote's mistakes, as for instance when the assistant turns a newly created human into a dog. The trickster brother of the creator in San Cristobal in the Solomon Islands is just as hopeless. The Banks Island creator in Melanesia is also an underminer of creation, introducing death into the world. In California, the Maidu Coyote has some power over the creator, Earth Starter, and also introduces death into the world with the help of his dog, Rattlesnake.

African tricksters typically challenge the creator's authority. Ananse, the Spider, is a popular West African trickster. In his Ashanti form he works behind the creator's back disguised as a bird, creating things on his own in an attempt to prove his superiority. In the Congo region the Baluba creator is challenged by the trickster Kadifukke who claims to have been born of the earth rather than of the creator. The creator tries to kill him but the trickster escapes even imprisonment in a burning hut. In the same region the Basonge creator is challenged by his son, who claims to have created himself. In another Basonge story the creator is challenged successfully by the trickster Kolombo.

As we experience these myths we must wonder why our instinct is often to support the trickster in his machinations. Would we all be tricksters if we could successfully challenge authority and the status quo?

TWINS IN CREATION

The motif of twins in creation myths is prevalent in many parts of the world and tends to take one of two forms. Either the twins are opposites in terms of their relation to creation—one constructive, one destructive—or they work in tandem as a sacred pair. The first type clearly represents a sense of the essential duality of existence from the very beginning. The second type is more esoteric, more mysterious, perhaps representing a hope for unity in the human psyche—a transcendence of opposites in a single unified force.

The twins as opposite and conflicting forces are found in many Native North American cultures. The Algonquin of Canada tell of the birth of the twins Glooskap and Malsum to the creator, Earth Mother. When Earth Mother died, Glooskap made many wonders of creation from her body. Malsum made evil

things from the same body. The message is clearly that Mother Earth contains the potential for both good and evil. Many Native American earth-diver myths (*See* Part I; Earth-Diver Creation) involving the descent to earth of Sky Woman (*See* Sky Woman Descends) have similar myths. The Huron Sky Woman has one good and one bad twin, who struggle for dominance in the world. The Iroquoian Oneida, Onondaga, and Tuscarora all have essentially the same myth. Many Tewa Indians of the Southwest have the tale of the War Twins, grandsons of Spider Grandmother, who together represent a reprehensible human tendency to want to undermine creation by making war. The Yuma of Arizona say that the creator himself was born of the maternal waters as twins—one good and one bad. This would appear to be the ultimate expression of the essence of duality in creation itself.

Good and bad twins struggle in other parts of the world as well. In Melanesia, the Banks Islands "Mother Stone" gives birth to the wise Quat and the foolish Tangaro who fight for dominance. The neighboring New Hebrides people have a similar myth, in which the wise twin is the creator and the second twin is a devil figure who must be exiled. The Mande of Mali have a complex myth in which the creator makes seeds for two pairs of twins—each set composed of a male and a female in the world egg. A struggle eventually emerges between a bad twin, Pemba and a good twin, Faro.

The second type of twin myth stresses the sacredness of the twins, who are almost always culture heroes who support and develop the work of the creator. The African Dogon myth—one of the most complex and esoteric—tells of a cosmic egg (*See* Cosmic Egg in Creation) that produces two birth sacs, each with a set of male and female twins, each member of which contains the elements of the opposite sex as well. These are the androgynous children of the creator, Amma. They are the Nummo, the essence of creation itself. They represent the overcoming of opposites, the overcoming of duality. In another Dogon myth, Amma fills Earth with his seed—water, the life force—and the Nummo twins are the result. Among the Batak of Sumatra in Indonesia, the first children of a divine couple are twins who become the ancestors of the people. That the twins are a boy and a girl is, of course, necessary for the production of the people, but the boy-girl combination as twins also suggests a kind of androgyny that represents unity of purpose and being—the transcendence of the opposites of duality.

In Mesoamerica, the twins are sacred culture heroes. The Mixtec twins help the people to understand their role in creation. The Mayan Xbalanque and Hunahpu are conceived miraculously and, after their work as culture heroes, are immortalized as the Sun and Moon by the creator.

In South America the Guarani of Brazil tell how the creator made Our Mother (Earth), who gave birth to the twins, Our Older Brother and Our Younger Brother, who continue the work of creation in tandem.

In the Native North American land above Mesoamerica, there are many sacred twins as well. The Kiowa son of

the Sun was broken in two and became culture hero twins. The Papago female culture hero gives birth to twin culture heroes who are killed by evil forces. The Hopi creator Tawa and the goddess Spider Woman, in her form as Goddess of Life, produced sacred twins who worked for the people. In nearby Acoma and Laguna the twins are women—"Life Bringer" and "Full Basket"—who create with seeds given them by their mentor, the goddess Thinking Woman, from their creator father. They emerge from the lower world into the present world and literally plant the elements of existence. Twins play a large and complex role in Navajo mythology. First Man and First Woman produced several sets—all but one made up of a male and a female who eventually act as man and wife to produce the people, although they are warned to keep their incest secret. The one set that is not male and female is the firstborn set, a pair of hermaphrodites who symbolize harmony and the overcoming of opposites. One of these twins invented pottery, the other a form of basketry. The Sioux maiden who survived the great flood married the Eagle, Wanblee, and gave birth by him to twins—a boy and a girl—who would become the necessarily incestuous parents of the Sioux nation.

Twins have an important part in Indo European mythology. Twin gods appear in Greek and Vedic (Indian) mythology and perhaps most famously in Rome, where the twins Romulus and Remus, sacred children of Mars and Rhea Silva (War and Earth) found Rome itself before their quarrel turns them into an expression of duality.

TWO CREATORS MOTIF

In many creation myths there are two creators. This motif seems to serve varying purposes depending upon the character of the creators. The twin (*See* Twins in Creation) and the trickster (*See* Trickster in Creation) motifs, as well as the devil in creation motif (*See* Devil in Creation), are directly related to the two creators motif. In the devil myths we find creator assistants or enemies who directly affect creation in a negative way through their actions. Central Asian mythologies are particularly relevant in this connection. The Mongolian Sky father, for example, has two sons—Ulgen, who creates in the Upper World, and Erleg, who essentially undermines creation in the Lower World.

The twin motif usually—as in the case of the Iroquoian and Huron myths, for example—involves twins who both create but who do so in opposing fashions, one creating negative elements, the other positive ones. The trickster myths—particularly those involving Coyote, are something like the devil myths in that the trickster, although he may pretend to assist the creator, in fact often undermines his work. In the Achomawi myth of North America, Silver Fox and Coyote are the creators, but Silver Fox does all the work while Coyote sleeps and then wakes up and begins eating everything in sight. Quat, the Melanesian creator of the Banks Islands, is copied in his work by his foolish would-be creator brother, but the brother is lazy and unfocused; he forgets the humans he has created and leaves them in the ground, where they rot. In the Southeast Congo region

of Africa, the creator is challenged by a secondary trickster figure, Kadifukke. In the Basonge myth of the same region it is the creator's son, and later the trickster Kolombo, who claim to be more successful creators that the high god. In both the Baluba and Basonge cases the original creator fails in his attempt to fully quash the work of his challenger.

In Melanesian San Cristobal, Agunua is assisted by his brother, who does more harm than good. The Southwestern American Pima creator Earth Maker is accompanied in his work by the equally unhelpful Coyote. In the neighboring Papago tribe, Coyote is more helpful to the primary creator, Elder Brother. Old Man Coyote is a positive creator for the Crow people of North America, but he somehow gives birth to a negative being called Little Coyote who is creative but who causes serious problems in the world—problems that seem to be beyond Old Man Coyote's control.

In some cases the two creators divide the work. Usually one takes care of the heavens while the other directs work on Earth. This is so of the African Yoruba creators, Olurun and Orishanla. The former is of Heaven, the latter of Earth. In Madagascar, the Malagasy father creator takes responsibility for the upper world and for the spiritual existence and souls. His daughter, Earth Mother, is concerned with the earth, physical matters, and bodies. The Mandan of South Dakota say the creator is concerned with the sky while his assistant, Lone Man, directs creation on Earth. The Bantu Ekoi have a creator, Obassi Osaw, who lives in the sky and controls light and weather. His partner is Obassi Nsi, who creates and nurtures on Earth and absorbs those who die. The Native American Lenape creator deals with heavenly visions; his assistant, Spirit of the Rock, gives earthly solidity to the visions. The Dyak people of Borneo have a creation myth in which two birds lay eggs that become creators of Heaven and Earth.

In some cases there are simply two creators working well together with no particularly separate responsibilities. The Romanian creator is nicely helped by the little mole. The Mayan Tepeu and Feathered Serpent create together. The Cahto of California say that Thunder created with his companion Nagaitcho.

In these cases two creators help to explain the duality of creation, the essential separation of the worlds of Heaven and Earth, or simply the joys of joint cretion.

WOMAN AS SOURCE OF EVIL

People brought up in the Judeo-Christian tradition are accustomed to the concept of woman as the source of evil in creation. In fact, it might be argued that the myth of Satan as the serpent successfully tempting Eve to break the Creator's commandment in the Garden of Eden has had a pervasive negative effect on the treatment of women in Judeo-Christian-based cultures. Such myths are evident in other patriarchal cultures as well. In ancient Greece and Rome we find the myth of Pandora. Hesiod tells us that Zeus created Pandora, the first woman on Earth, with the specific purpose of having her bring

misery to the world. He did so because he was angry that Prometheus had stolen fire from the gods for the benefit of humans. Pandora made the mistake of accepting a box as a gift from the gods, and when she opened it all of the evils that plague humanity sprang forth into the world. It can be argued that this negative story was created by patriarchal peoples to undermine an earlier vision of Pandora as a bringer of positive gifts of fertility and life to humans. Pandora's name means "Gift-Giver." In an Indian myth the creator, Prajapati, creates wanton women to delude humans with passion so that they will not challenge the gods for power. The creator Brahma creates the woman, Death, to preserve the barrier between gods and humans.



Illustration of Pandora opening the box, by Walter Crane. (© Bettmann/CORBIS)

In Native North America the Blackfoot people say that the first woman on Earth foolishly interfered in the process by which the creator was establishing eternal life for the people. The result was the establishment of death as a norm.

In Africa there are several myths about women as the source of evil. The Bantu Boshongo tell of the creation of Tsetse (Lightning) in the early days of existence. She was so bad and caused so much pain that she had to be exiled to the sky. The Dinka of Sudan tell how Abuk, the first woman, defied the creator by planting more seeds than the people were instructed to plant. Because of this greediness, the creator cut the rope between Heaven and Earth and all the problems that we humans have came into being. The Efik of Nigeria have a similar story. In their story, First Woman also defied the creator. She and her husband had been ordered to take all their meals with the creator and to refrain from the procreative act. Secretly the woman grew food for herself and her husband and began to procreate. This defiance led to the phenomenon of death. The creator of the Nyamwezi of Tanzania had two wives. When his favorite wife died he planted her in his hut and gradually a beautiful little plant grew up. The favorite wife would have been reborn from that plant had not the jealous second wife destroyed it. Again, the result of her evil act was death in the world.

That all the cultures mentioned above are essentially patriarchal in character should come as no surprise.

WORD-BASED CREATION

The use of complex language based on specific words is a defining characteristic of the human species. Naturally enough, then, creation myths told by humans using words often involve the establishment of the word as a basic force behind creation itself. The Christian re-expression of creation in the Book of John as translated in English begins "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God." The Wapangwa people of Tanzania say that the Word existed before all things and was the catalyst for creation. The book of Genesis depicts the Hebrew creator beginning the whole process by speaking: "Let there be light." A Swahili version of creation begins in the same way. The Mayan creators said "Let there be Earth" and there was. The Maori creator begins things by telling the original darkness to become "light-possessing." The fellow Polynesian creator of Tuamotuan awoke and spoke to the darkness and, with his Activating Self as a helper, made his thoughts and words into concrete reality. The Polynesian creator of Samoa spoke to an original rock and creation was established. The Native American Crow creator said out loud, "I wish I had someone to talk to," and earth-diving ducks came into existence. The Egyptian creator in his form as Khepri, the Morning Sun, started everything by calling out his own name. In India the primal man, Purusha, started creation by pronouncing the words, "I am," much as the child awakening to consciousness might feel "I am." The Welsh creator, too, began creation by saying his own name. The sacred Indian sound, "Ohm" conveys the sense of the creation emanating from the all-encompassing essence of existence, Brahman. In Islam the sacred *Qur'an* is spoken to Muhammad by God by way of the angel Jibril (Gabriel), thus beginning what could be called the new Islamic creation.



A page of the Ko'ran from an ancient book. (© Yamo | Dreamstime.com)

A Talmudic version of the Jewish creation story says that when the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet appeared before the creator he chose *beth* to be the first letter of the first word of creation. That word was *baruch* ("Blessing"). A Tibetan Bon tale tells how the creator breathed syllables that gave birth to the word. In Native North America the Yumi creator says the

names of the four directions and they became real as the cornerstones of creation.

Songs can become a particularly sacred expression of words and some creators prefer to sing things into existence. The Hopi creators of the American Southwest first taught the people words so that, like them, at the beginning of creation, they could ceremonially sing things into existence. The Irish poet Amairgen sings the Celtic Ireland into existence with his magic words.

World Parent Creation. *See Part I*

Part IV

Glossary

The items in the glossary explain or define items that are mentioned in the earlier parts of this book but are not *necessarily* connected directly to creation myths. The longer entries, such as those on the major world religions and mythologies (e.g., Egyptian, Greek, Norse, Hindu, Christian, Jewish, and Islamic entries), are included here as useful background material for an understanding of the creation myths associated with these cultures. Several of these longer articles are based on articles in my *Oxford Companion to World Mythology.* They are used here with permission from Oxford University Press. Cross-references to headings in Parts I, II, and III are specified accordingly. Other references are to other entries in part IV.

Abassi

The creator god of the African Efik people, Abassi so feared the ambitions of his human creations that he demanded they take all their meals with him so that he could keep a constant watch on them.

Aborigine

An *aborigine* is a person native or indigenous to a particular place. Native Americans are *aboriginal* people of North America. The term is most commonly used in connection with the native peoples of Australia (*See* Part II; Australian Aborigine).

Abraham

Abraham (Avraham, at first Abram), or Ibrahim in Arabic, is a central figure in Hebrew mythology as developed in the biblical Book of *Genesis*. Abraham was the mythical hero and father of all three of the monotheistic (*See* monotheism) Abrahamic religions—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam (*See* Judaism, Christianity, Islam). Genesis contains several versions of the story of Abraham and his immediate descendants.

A man named Tehar, who had several sons, including Abram, decided to move from the ancient city of Ur in Mesopotamia (*See* Mesopotamia), to Canaan (*See* Canaan). In the party with Tehar were his grandson Lot, Abram, and Abram's wife Sara'i, who was apparently barren. After traveling northeast for some time, the group stopped in Haran, where Tehar died—at the age of two hundred and five. It was in Haran that Abram's tribal god, Yahweh, came to the 75-year-old patriarch and commanded him to move on to Canaan where "I shall make you into a great nation" (12:2). So Abram journeyed to Shechem where he built an altar to Yahweh. He did the same thing in Bethel and as he moved south, following a tradition of building altars to his tribal god on sites sacred to others.

Famine caused the group to move to Egypt for a while before returning to Canaan, now with a great deal of wealth and livestock. But as the land they settled could not support the people of both Abram and his cousin Lot, Lot moved to the Jordan plain near Sodom. Again Yahweh spoke to Abram, promising him the land of Canaan, and Abram erected an altar to Yahweh in Hebron. After Abram had assisted an alliance of tribes in a successful war, Yahweh again appeared to him, promising that after four hundred years of oppression his descendants would possess all of the land of Canaan from the Nile to the Euphrates.

Sara'i was old and still childless, and as she realized that Abram needed a son, she gave him her Egyptian slave girl Hagar as a concubine. In time Ishmael (Is'mail) was born. But Sara'i became jealous and mistreated Hagar. Yahweh told Hagar that her son would be "like the wild ass . . . at odds with all his kin" (16:12).

It was when Abram was 99 years old that Yahweh announced that Abram was now to be called Abraham, the "father of many nations." Yahweh alone would be the god of his descendants. The sign of the acceptance of this solemn covenant between Yahweh and his people would be circumcision. Circumcision was to be a sign of community and of exclusivity as the uncircumcised would be "cut off from the kin of his father" (17:14). Both Abraham and Ishmael immediately had themselves circumcised.

Yahweh proclaimed that Sara'i was now to be called Sarah ("princess") and that in spite of her old age she would give birth to a child. Ishmael, too, would be fruitful and would father a great nation. Three men—presumably angels—appeared to Abraham and confirmed the fact that Sarah would soon give birth to a son.

Abraham was living in Gerar among the Philistines when Sarah gave birth to Isaac. No longer childless, Sarah demanded that Abraham expel Hagar and Ishmael from his entourage. This he did, since Yahweh informed him that although Ishmael would be the father of a great nation, Isaac would be his true heir.

When Isaac was still a boy Yahweh tested Abraham's loyalty by demanding that he sacrifice his son to him. Abraham agreed, but at the last minute Yahweh provided a sheep as a substitute for the child.

Abraham and Sarah both died in Hebron, she at the age of 127, he at the age of 175. Isaac buried Abraham in a cave in Hebron.

Isaac, through whom Yahweh renewed the covenant with the Hebrews, married Rabekah and she gave birth to Jacob and Esau. Still again, Yahweh renewed to Jacob his promise of the land of Canaan to the children of Israel, Jacob having been renamed Israel by God. Jacob's most famous son, by his wife Rachel, was Joseph of the many-colored coat.

The Abrahamic myth serves as a mythological justification for the particular role of Israel and the Jews in Middle Eastern history. (*See* Part II; Hebrew).

Abuk and Garang

Abuk and Garang are the first people—the Adam and Eve—of the Sudanese Dinka-like Eve in the Hebrew story of Genesis. Abuk, the first woman, defied a rule set down by the creator that she and her husband, Garang, plant one seed of grain a day to meet their needs. Abuk was selfish, and decided to plant more seeds because she wanted more than she and her husband needed. The creator grew so angry at her arrogance that he who moved away from Earth and cut the rope that tied Earth to his home in Heaven. Because of the creator's absence, humans have since been plagued by work, sickness, and death. Also, women have all too often been regarded as dangerous, conniving beings.

Achamoth

In Gnostic mythology, Sophia was the mother of both Christ and a female spirit named Achamoth. It was Achamoth who created the material world and also gave birth to Ildabaoth, the Son of Darkness, and to various spirits that were emanations of Jehovah.

Activating Self

The creator in the Polynesian culture of the South Pacific Tuamotuan Islands, Kiho, created from nothing by way of his thoughts. Kiho was accompanied only by his double, his Activating Self, who gave concreteness to his creative thoughts.

Adam and Eve

In the first chapter of the biblical book of Genesis, we are told that the creator made humans, one male, one female, in his image. Genesis 5:1 tells us that after God created "them" he named "them" "man" (*adam*). The second chapter, probably an earlier version written by a different author, tells us that God created a "man" *(adam)* out of dust (earth), breathed life into him, and placed him in the Garden of Eden. Later, according to the story, God decided to make a suitable partner for the man. He put the man to sleep, removed one of his ribs, and out of that rib made the first *woman.* Adam's name, then, comes from the Hebrew meaning "man" and perhaps from the Hebrew *adamah* meaning "earth." Adam named his partner Eve (*Havvah*), the "Mother of all Living Beings". The name suggests a connection to the old middle eastern mother goddesses who, like mother goddesses in much of the world, were often associated with trees and snakes. In Genesis 3, 1–6, we find that Eve is on speaking terms with the Serpent of this story (Satan in the form of a serpent), and he convinced Eve to eat fruit from a tree forbidden to the couple by God. Eve then convinced Adam to eat of the fruit as well. The forbidden tree was the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. The couple now knew about good and

evil and they became guilty about their sexual desires and covered their genitals with leaves. God punished Adam and Eve for disobeying him by exiling them from Paradise and by introducing work, pain, and death into their lives. In Islam, Adam repents, travels about the earth, and goes, accompanied by Hawwa (Eve) on a *hajj* (pilgrimage) to Mecca, where he is said by some to have built the first *kabah* (the great structure towards which Muslims pray), and thus to have been, in effect, not only the father of humanity, but the first prophet. The first children of Adam and Eve were Cain and Abel. Genesis 5 says that Adam, who lived to be 930 years old, begat a son named Seth when he was 130. (*See* Part II; Hebrew, Islamic)

Adronga

Adronga 'ba o'bapiri was the creator of the Lugbara people of Uganda and the Congo areas of Africa. He made blood and then used it to create the people.

Aeneas

In the great Roman epic, the *Aeneid,* by the poet Virgil, the Trojan prince, Aeneas, the son of a mortal and the goddess Venus, escapes the slaughter at the end of the Trojan War, and after many adventures, founds the city that would become known as Rome. (*See* Aeneid)

Aeneid

The Roman poet Virgil was commissioned by the Emperor Augustus to write an epic about the creation of Rome. Composed between 29 and 19 B.C.E., the epic made use of already existing Roman myths and legends. The hero of the epic is Aeneas, a Trojan warrior who survives the destruction of Troy in the Trojan War—a war described in the *Iliad* of the Greek poet, Homer. Aeneas has been commanded by his mother, the goddess Venus (*See* Venus) to found a new Troy, which will be the city of Rome. The *Aeneid* is divided into 12 sections. Book One describes the flight of Aeneas and his family from Troy after the city's fall to the Greeks. Aeneas and his followers are shipwrecked at Carthage, where they are entertained by Queen Dido. In Book Two, Aeneas relates the story of his adventures thus far, primarily describing how the Greeks tricked the Trojans by entering the city in a huge wooden horse, thus allowing them to destroy Troy. Book Three is the story of the trip from Troy to Carthage and the death of Aeneas's father Anchises in Sicily. Book Four tells of the love affair between Dido and Aeneas. Aeneas is reminded by his divine mother of his true goal and leaves for Italy. In despair, Dido commits suicide. Aeneas holds funeral games for his father in Sicily in Book Five, and in Book Six he visits his father in the underworld. In Book Seven Latinus, a king in Italy, offers the hero his daughter Lavinia as a wife. The woman's fiancée Tumus, understandably, objects to the marriage and war results. The last books are about preparations for war and the war itself. In Book Twelve, Aeneas wins the war, marries Lavinia, and founds Lavinium. According to Roman tradition, Aeneas's son Ascanius or Iulius, the ancestor of Julius Caesar, would build a settlement near what would become Rome (*See* Part II; Roman).

Aesir

In Norse Mythology, the Aesir were the warrior deities of the sky who lived in Asgard (*See* Asgard). They were opposed by a (probably) more ancient set of Earth-based fertility deities, the Vanir. The major Aesir were Odin the Aesir king, his consort Frigg, Freya the goddess of love, the powerful thunder god, Thor, Tyr the god of war, Heimdall the guard of the bridge that led to Asgard, and a much-loved dying god, Balder. (*See* Norse Mythology)

African Mythology

African mythology is made up of many tribal mythologies. To the extent that generalities are possible in connection with the sub-Saharan part of the continent, it is possible to say that animism—the cult of spirits, especially animal spirits, is central to the mythology, as are the themes of the somewhat withdrawn presence of a creator god, the association of the earth with the god's female consort, and the active and sometimes disruptive presence of culture hero-tricksters. A few examples of these themes follow.

The Pygmies of the central region worship Khonvum, a god who once lived on Earth as animal master but who now lives in the heavens and only deals with humans by way of animal spirits. Animal spirits are important among the neighboring Bushmen, too. Their Praying Mantis Kaggen (Cagn) is married to the Antelope or spirit. Kaggen is also a resurrection god whose trickster powers allow his body to reform after he is killed by enemies and stripped of his flesh by ants. A Hottentot high god, Tsui-Goab, is a storm god who struggles against a devil figure in a "black sky." The Hottentot culture hero-trickster-first man is Heitsi-Eibib, whose mother, a cow, conceived him miraculously.

Many tribes have supreme creators who, for various reasons—mostly become disappointed with their human creations—and retreat to the sky where they associate with humans only by way of animal spirits. The Shilluk Juck is such a god, and the son of a crocodile mother is his intermediary. For the Dogon the creator god is Amma; the Nummo twins are his intermediaries who, with the help of various culture heroes, participate in an on-going creation. The Bantu tribes further south have several versions of a supreme but distant creator deity. The southern Bantu Tilo is such a god, as is the god Kurunga. Still others are Ndyami and Kalunga. The characteristics of some of these gods seem to have been influenced by the Christian colonizers, who attached elements of a monotheistic concept of God to them. More important to most Bantus than the supreme deity concept seems to be the first man-culture hero figure. The Kaffir-Zulus, for instance, have Unkulunkulu, made in the supreme being's image, who was born miraculously from the goddess associated with Earth. It is he who teaches humans what they need to know. Hlakanaya is another version of the Kaffir trickster-culture hero.

Among the Maasai of southeast Africa is the high god Ngai whose daughter long ago fell in love with Kintu, the first man, who, after satisfactorily completing tests set by Ngai, was given the god's daughter in marriage. Kintu and the god's daughter are the original culture heroes of the Maasai, teaching them the domestic and

agricultural arts. But Kintu also introduces Death, a son of Ngai, who follows Kintu back to Earth after the hero, in spite of the warnings of Ngai, gives in to greed and returns to the sky to retrieve grain he had forgotten to bring down to Earth.

The Bantu high god of the Congo region is the sky god Nzambe or Nzame. Nzambe created a first man, Fam; a rebel whom the god buried in a hole in the ground. Nzame's second human creation was Sekume, who created his own mate from a tree. But Fam frequently appeared and corrupted Sekume and his wife and the human race to which she gave birth. In many myths of the Congo area the supreme deity's son, a culture hero, is rejected by his father. Bingo is such a hero, as is Nyiko in the Cameroons.

The first man is frequently a trickster who steals from or outsmarts the high god. Whether the Sudanese Bele, Tule, Mba, or the Spiders—the Ashanti Ananse or the Manja Seto—these tricksters help the people by stealing such important gifts as storytelling power, fire, or water.

Perhaps the best known African mythologies are those of the West African Ashanti, Fon, and Yoruba peoples. Nyame is the Ashanti sky god, the rain source for his wife Asase Ya, who is the Earth itself. It is the trickster Ananse, the Spider, who is the god's connection to human beings. In effect, Ananse corrects the mistakes of the creator's creation, convincing the god to send rain to temper the heat of the new sun, and rivers and ocean banks to prevent the primordial water from flooding the world. Ananse also lives up to his trickster reputation by succeeding in marrying the high god's daughter. Another important West African trickster is Legba, who so infuriated the high god with his tricks that the god retreated from the earth to the heavens. Still another trickster is Eshu.

A Fon creator god is Nana Buluku; his twin children Mahu and Lisa—Earth and Sky, fertility and virility—are responsible for balance in the world. Their son sustains life by controlling the deities who embody various aspects of nature.

The Yoruba creator god is the distant Olorun whose children were begat by the primordial maternal waters, Olokun. These offspring were Obatala of the sky and Odudua of the earth. From their union, in turn, came dry and wet land, which produced Orungan, who made love to his mother, producing the later Yoruba gods.

Agunua

The creator serpent, or *figona*, of the Melanesian people of San Cristobal in the Papua New Guinea Solomon Islands of the South pacific, Agunua, had four eyes and could see everywhere at once. He was the most powerful of the figona.

Ahriman

See Angra Mainyu

Ahura Mazda

The chief god of the ancient Iranians and later the Zoroastrians, Ahura Mazda (Ohrmazd), first came to Iran during the Aryan (Indo Iranian) migrations of the second millennium B.C.E. as one of the so-called *ahura* gods of the Ancient Indo-European past. His equivalent gods among the Aryans who invaded India in the same period were Indra and Varuna. In both India and Iran the old gods seem to have been either *asuras* (*ahuras* in Iran)

or *devas* (*daevas* in Iran). In the *Avesta,* the holy book of Zoroaster (Zarathustra), Ahura Mazda (Ohrmazd) is the supreme god, the first "Wise Lord," the sky god organizer of the sun and the stars. He stands in opposition to an evil principle called Angra Maiynu, (Ahriman). According to one version of the myth, Ahura Mazda and Angra Maiynu were both born of Zurvan (Time). When the evil principle escaped from the primeval womb into the world, Zurvan was forced to divide Time between good and evil until a time in the distant future when goodness would prevail. Ahura Mazda is often depicted as a bearded man on a winged disk, a position that associates him with the sun, an appropriate association, since light and fire were central factors in Zoroastrian ritual and dogma. (*See* Part II; Zoroastrian).

Aientsik

In the Native American Mohawk creation story, a female figure in the upper world where everything was perfect gives birth to Earth (Aientsik) and is pushed through a hole left by an uprooted tree into the space between the heavens and the unformed world below. She becomes an example of the Woman Who Descends from the Sky in the Iroguoian creation myths.

Akkadians

The Akkadians were a Semitic people who, under a king known as Sargon I, conquered large parts of Mesopotamia late in the third millennium B.C.E. They established a capital at Akkad, near the old Sumerian Kish. They adapted their language to the Sumerian form of cuneiform writing and that language predominated in the area for some time.

Akongo

Akongo is the "Mysterious One," the source of being of the Central African Ngombe people. In the beginning Akongo lived with the people, but he got so tired of human quarrels that he left and has not been seen since. (*See* Deus Otiosus)

Alatangana

Alatangana is a god of the Kono people of Mali. It was he who challenged the original creator, Sa (Death) by trying to improve on creation. He made Sa's slush solid and added animals and plants to it to make it more lively. When Alatangana asked Sa for his daughter's hand in marriage, the older god refused. Alatangana and the girl eloped and produced children who all spoke different languages. These were the original people of the various races.

Algonquians

Many Native American peoples speak versions of an Algonquian language and are, therefore, referred to collectively as Algonquians for linguistic purposes. There is a tribe in Canada known as the Algonquin. Other Algonquian speakers include the Anishinabe, Arapaho, Blackfoot, Blood, Cheyenne, Lenape, Penobscot, and Wyot (*See* Part II; Anishinabe, Arapaho, Blackfoot, Blood, Cheyenne, Lenape, Penobscot, Wyot).

All-Maker

All-Maker is a name applied to the creator of the eastern North American Penobscot tribe.

Allah

In Islam, the usual name for God is Allah, a name derived from the Arabic for *the*

god, *al Lah* (< al *il-lah).* coming from the old Semitic *el* indicating divinity. Although "Allah" was the name of the head god of the old Arabic-Meccan pantheon, it must be emphasized that the Muslim Allah is not the same as that deity. The Muslim Allah is the sole god, the Creator who determines all things, the only being to be worshipped. "There is no god other than Allah" is the central Islamic belief. He is the unknowable one of the "99 beautiful names." The Quaranic Sura (Chapter) 112, the Sura of Unity, says: "He is God, One, the ever self-sufficing, God the Eternal. He does not beget and he was not begotten, and there is not anyone like him." Although less personalized than the Hebrew/Christian Yahweh/God, Allah is generally believed by all three religions to be the same being. (*See* Islam, God)

Amairgen

Amairgen was the warrior/bard-prophet of Irish mythology. In his song to Ireland in the *Book of Invasions* he contains reality and history within himself, somehow singing the new Ireland into existence. His Welsh counterpart is Taliesen. Both poets have Indo European roots that tie them to the Indian man-god Krishna, the poet of the Hindu *Bhagavadgita*, who contains the universe within himself.

Amaterasu

In Shinto mythology and Japanese tradition, the Sun goddess Amaterasu Omikami is the prime ancestor of the Japanese Emperor. Amaterasu is queen of the *kami;* the Shinto forces of Nature. She is honored especially at her temple at Ise, Japan. As the Rising Sun, she gives spiritual power to her people. Amaterasu's brother is the storm god, Susanowo. One day when Susanowo visited his sister in Heaven, he bit her necklace and covered the pieces with clouds, thus producing five gods. Meanwhile, Amaterasu made three goddesses by breaking her brother's sword, chewing on the pieces and blowing a cloud over them. When later, in a drunken fury, Susanowo did much damage to Heaven and Earth, including Amaterasu's home, the goddess hid in a cave, and the world was thus deprived of warmth and light. many creatures and plants died. The gods begged Amaterasu to return to the world but she refused. Only when the goddess Ama no Uzume danced lasciviously in front of the cave, causing the gods to laugh, did Amaterasu became curious and open her door. When she did so she saw her reflection in a mirror the gods had placed before the door and was so overcome with her own beauty that she came out of the cave to examine her reflection more closely. When she did so, the world became bright and warm again, and life revived in it. Later Amaterasu gave her jewels and mirror to her grandson Ninigi who went down to Japan as the first ruler. (*See* Part II; Japanese).

Amma

Amma is the father-creator god of the Dogon people of Africa. In some versions of the Dogon creation he literally is the cosmic egg that precedes creation. (*See* Part II; Dogon)

Amun

In the creation myth of the ancient Egyptian cult center of Hermopolis, Amun (Amon) and his female aspect Amaunet

were the hidden aspect of pre-creation and were responsible, along with the other Hermopolitan gods, collectively known as the Ogdoad, for the existence of the cosmic egg of creation. Later Amun became associated with the Old Kingdom high god Re (Ra) and the result was Amun-Re. (*See* Part II; Egyptian)

Amun-Re (Amun Ra)

Amun Re (Amun Ra) was an Egyptian Middle and New Kingdom combination at the cult center of Thebes/Karnak of the high god Amun, originally of Egyptian Hermopolis, and the ubiquitous ancient Sun god, Re (Ra). He was married to Mut and was a solar god with a ram's head. Probably the most important high god in Egyptian mythology, he was for a brief time superseded by the solar disk god the Aton during the reign of Akhenaton. (*See* Part II; Egyptian).

An

See Anu

Ananse

Ananse, the Spider, is a trickster god of West Africa. Like other tricksters, Erlik, Coyote, Raven, and West African figures such as Legba and Eshu, he plays a role in creation. The Ashanti people tell how Ananse created the first people, and how he constantly challenged the authority and power of the prime creator. He even succeeded in stealing away the high god's daughter.

Like other tricksters, Ananse often represents human interests against an authoritarian god. The Abure people believe, for instance, that Ananse got Nyame to send rain to cool them after the experience of Nyame's overly hot sun. According to an Ashanti myth it was Ananse who stole storytelling ability from Nyame. The mysterious transforming power of language is an important part of the trickster's repertoire (*See* Part II; Ashanti).

Androgynes

Androgynes (Greek *andros* meaning "man" and *gyne*, meaning "woman") are beings that are both male and female. In some myths they are hermaphrodites—usually with female breasts and male genitalia, as in the case of the Greek Hermaphroditus, a combination of his beautiful parents, Hermes and Aphrodite. Some would say that all gods that create alone and ex nihilo are really androgynes, like the Orphic creator Phanes-Dionysos or the Egyptian Atum. (*See* Part II; Egyptian, Greek). Some world parents are, in effect, both genders in one being, which is why they must be separated to allow the differentiation necessary for creation. The story of Geb and Nut in Egypt or any number of creation myths involving the separation of earth and sky are examples of myths in which the universe itself is an androgyne that must be broken into male and female in order for life to evolve.

Philosophically and psychologically, the androgyne has sometimes stood for wholeness or individuation and integration. Plato, in his *Symposium* (189–191), attributing the idea to the comic playwright, Aristophanes, says that at first there were three kinds of beings: male, female, and androgyne, each with four legs and four arms. When these beings became too arrogant, Zeus split them each into two parts. From the males came



Roman bust of a two-faced hermaphrodite. (© Araldo de Luca/CORBIS)

homosexuals, from the females came lesbians, and from the original androgynes came heterosexual males and females who are intent on sex, that is, on restoring temporarily the primeval conjoined androgynous state.

Angra Mainyu

Sometimes called Ahriman, Angra Mainyu is the twin brother of Spenta Maiynu ("Holy Spirit") or Vohu Mainyu (the spirit of "Right Thought") or, according to some, of Ahura Mazda (the "Wise Lord") in Zoroastrian mythology(*See* Zoroastrian mythology). He is the source of the duality basic to Zoroastrianism (*See* Part III; Duality in Creation).

Anguta

Among several Inuit peoples of northern North America, Anguta is an important deity. For the Nugumuit he is the supreme creator. For the Oqomiut he is the not so perfect father of the heroine/creator Sedna (*See* Sedna).

Animism

Animism is the belief that all things are animated—by spirits. The word often refers specifically to the idea that aspects of nature—rivers, mountain, trees, and so forth—were originally parts of immortal beings. Animism plays an important role in many creation stories that involve the dismemberment of primal beings, whose body parts literally become the world, as in many world parent creation myths. The mythologies of many African and native American groups are decidedly animistic, for instance, as is the mythology of Shinto Japan with its *kami* (spirits). (*See* Part I; World Parent Creation, Part III; Animistic Creation, Dismemberment of Primordial Being as Creation)

Anjir

The aboriginal Australian Kokowarra people tell of the giant Anjir, out of whom the first people were released for emergence into this world.

Annunaki

The Anunnaki (Anunna, Anukki, Enunaki), who are named for the ancient sky god An (Anu) are the Sumerian deities forming a primordial pantheon associated with fertility. Later they would become judges in the underworld. (*See* Anu)

Anthropomorphism

Anthropomorphism refers to the attribution of human characteristic in inanimate

objects, animals, or natural phenomena. In many mythologies such phenomena as the various directional winds, light, love, and motherhood are personified, that is, given human characteristics. So it is in Egyptian mythology, for instance, that Geb and Nut are Earth and Sky (*See* Part II; Egyptian). Animals are often anthropomorphized, as in the Native American myths of Coyote and Raven (*See* Coyote, Raven).

Anu

Anu (Sumerian An) was a major god of ancient Mesopotamia. He played a prevalent role in the creation myths of the Sumerians, Akkadians, Babylonians, and Hittite-Hurrians. Originally, the Sumerian cuneiform (the earliest form of writing) sign for An simply meant "divinity," much as El or *il* or *ilah* (*al-ilah*>Allah) does in Semitic languages. In the Sumerian creation myth An represents the heavens and is the son of the primeval maternal waters, personified by the goddess Nammu. He mates with his sister Ki (Earth), forming the universe, or An-Ki, and they produce the Sumerian pantheon.

Aphrodite

The Greek goddess Aphrodite was said by some to be the daughter of Zeus and the nymph Dione. Some say she originated in Phoenicia as the Semitic fertility goddess Astarte. The Roman version of Aphrodite is Venus (*See* Venus). In classical Greece Aphrodite was a flirt and a troublemaker, associated with irrational passion. One story has it that she was not the daughter of Zeus but of the ancient god Ouranos. According to that story, when Ouranos' genitals were cut off by Kronos they landed in the ocean near Cyprus and the foam (semen) within them produced Aphrodite. Aphrodite was traditionally attended by Eros (love).

Apollo

One of the most important of the Olympian gods of Greece, Apollo (Apollon) was the son of Zeus and Leto. Apollo was worshipped as the guardian of young men, Artemis, his twin sister, as the guardian of young women. Apollo was a god of light and sometimes specifically the sun—to the Romans, especially, he was Phoebus Apollo, the "pure shining" one. He played the lyre, was also an archer, and was sometimes depicted as a warrior. He riddled the Greek army at Troy with his fatal arrows. He was also the god of oracles with his home at the great oracular center of Delphi.

Apoyan Ta'che and Awitelin Tsita

The southwestern American Zuni creator Awonawilona (*See* Awonawilona) made the seed with which he impregnated the primeval waters with Awitelin Tsita (Earth Mother) and Apoyan Ta'chu (Sky Father). Sky Father and Earth Mother came together and engendered the creatures of our world.

Apsu

Apsu (Sumerian Abzu) was the underground sweet waters that resulted in the southern marsh lands of Mesopotamia (southern Iraq). The Sumerians believed that the wise god Enki (Akkadian Ea) lived in Absu. Some Sumerians believed that Nammu, a goddess, a personification

of Absu, created the first humans from these sweet waters. The Babylonians made Apsu into a deity who, along with the female salt-water primeval being Tiamat, would fight against the hero Marduk (*See* Part II; Babylonian)

Ara and Irik

Ara and Irik are the first beings in a creation myth of the Iban-Dyak people of Borneo. They took the form of birds and plucked two cosmic eggs from the maternal waters. From these eggs, Ara made the sky and Irik made the earth.

Aranyakas

*Aranyaka*s are ancient Vedic texts in India. They are explanations of earlier texts known as *Brahmanas* (*See* Brahmanas).

Archetype

The term "archetype" has been used in connection with myth and religion in many slightly different ways by different thinkers. Three modern myth scholars who have made special use of the concept are the Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung, the mythologist Joseph Campbell, and the University of Chicago religion scholar, Mircea Eliade.

For Jung, archetypes are universal psychic tendencies or "primordial images." Like others, Jung was fascinated by the appearance of certain motifs and even whole plots in cultures not geographically connected. He postulated what might be called the "parallel development" of myths because of a common "collective unconscious," the idea being that humans inherit certain mythic tendencies just as they inherit physical characteristics. So it is that we find the trickster, the father god, the flood, and the hero's quest in all parts of the world. These cultural embodiments strike familiar chords in people everywhere because the archetypes are a reflection, in their various cultural clothes, of a larger human psychic need.

In his first truly influential book, The *Hero With a Thousand Faces*, mythologist Joseph Campbell (*See* Joseph Campbell) applied archetypal theory to hero myths from around the world, revealing a universal or archetypal heroic monomyth in which such motifs as the miraculous conception and the quest for a lost object or person are universally present.

Eliade's use of "archetype" is less psychological than Jung's, for instance, and more religious. For him, archetypes are "sacred paradigms" or "exemplary models" that represent the transcendent aspect of life that emerges through ritual and other means into our linear time from cyclical myth time.

In creation myths—themselves expressions of what can be called the creation archetype—we find archetypal forms such as the ex nihilo creation, the earth-diver, the emergence from Mother Earth, and the sacred twin. Archetypes may be said to be the basis for a kind of universal symbolic language. It must be emphasized, however, that the universal archetypal language of myth *requires* the elements of particular cultural experience in order to be realized, just as dreams require the local experience of individuals. (*See* Campbell, Eliade, Jung).

Ares

Ares, a son of Zeus, was the Greek god of war. His Roman counterpart was the god Mars.

Ark

In the Genesis 6 story of the Bible, Noah built an ark to save his family and pairs of animals from the great flood sent by God. This ark is not to be confused with the Ark of the Covenant (*aron ha-berith*), which Yahweh gave to the wandering Israelites in the wilderness after they escaped from Egypt. The Ark of the Covenant was intended to contain the tablets of the covenant given by God to Moses. Later the Ark was captured by the Philistines, but still later it was recovered and placed in the Temple at Jerusalem. When the first temple was destroyed in 586 B.C.E. by the Babylonians, the Ark was lost.

Art as Re-creation

A defining human activity is the need to imitate reality—to re-create in painting, sculpture, and narrative, for example, what we know or think we know about existence. There have always been those who have felt compelled to represent existence indirectly through art. Remarkably, during the Paleolithic, for instance, when humans were engaged in a desperate evolutionary struggle to survive, people took the time to paint—to re-create—in the caves. And in the new art of our age, we have tried to reflect an understanding of the world that has been changed by the physical sciences, psychology, and other new fields.

In what can be called the "new mythology" of recent times, humans play a larger role than we did in the old myths. As physicist and philosopher Brian Swimme writes, "That which created all of this . . . now desires *our* creativity, commitment and labor, *our* delight in entering with full awareness the cosmic story. We are the creative, scintillating, searing, healing flame of the awesome and enchanting universe" (Swimme, 170–171). Without our consciousness, in other words, creation is meaningless; if we do not make creation conscious of itself, we have no reason for being.

Modern science tells us that in any system, there is an entropic pull towards disorder. It might be argued that creation itself, and the re-creation that is art, struggle against that pull, or attempt to create cosmos out of chaos. It can also be said that art is a metaphor for creation, an implicit celebration of consciousness and of the larger Creation. To study art is to study the gradual development of an ongoing myth of creation.

The works of the great masters of the medieval and renaissance periods in Europe reflected a view of creation based on certain absolute truths contained in the Bible and church teachings. In the modern age, beginning early in the 20th century, while the physicists and paleontologists were wrestling with the problems arising from the undermining of religious, Newtonian and Cartesian absolutes, artists were turning away from the kind of work based in these absolutes and were, instead, celebrating, in effect, the very consciousness that defines us as re-creators. The underlying characteristics of what we call modernism and post modernism in the arts suggests that in place

of old symbols and conventions based on old beliefs and understandings, the artist turns to the *process* of making art for subject matter. We are made aware of this process as early as in the paintings of Van Gogh, which reveal through visible brush strokes and bits of bare canvas the struggle between the artist's vision and the resistance of the medium. We find it in the cubist painters, who consider from various perspectives the forms that make up the painting. We find it in the abstract expressionism of a painter such as Jackson Pollock, whose personal relation to his art emanated from paintings literally about painting. The great cubist paintings of the early 20th century eschew the linear logic of a renaissance perspective and conventional forms that reflect a particular kind of religious order in favor of a celebration of the dynamic makeup of those forms revealed simultaneously on the surface of the canvas. In this sense, the modernist work is a representation of the story of $E = mc^2$, or of Uncertainty, or of the simultaneous existence of light as particles and waves. The art of the modernists and post-modernists represent the ongoing creation myth of which we are a functioning part.

Aryans

"Aryan" is a term derived from the Sanskrit word *arya* meaning "noble." It is a term often used interchangeably with " Indo Iranian," especially when applied to the people from the west and north who invaded the Indian subcontinent and old Persia (Iran) in the third millennium B.C.E., bringing what was presumably an early Indo European language to the area. The term "Aryan" has sometimes also been used interchangeably with the tern " Indo European," particularly when referring to what scholars have called a distinctive race of ancient peoples usually called proto-Indo Europeans; the ancestors not only of Indians and Iranians but of later Indo Europeans who speak languages derived from proto-Indo European—the people, for instance, who speak Celtic, Germanic, Romance, and Greek languages. (*See* Indo European).

Asase Ya

In the African Krachi creation, Asase Ya was the personification of Earth. She was the primordial mother on whom the creator, Wulbari (Heaven) lived. Eventually the couple would be separated by the crushed humans who lived between them.

Asgard

The Norse gods known as the Aesir (*See* Aesir) lived in Asgard, a place ruled by the high god Odin. In Asgard was the great hall known as Valhalla, where the gods and warriors celebrated. Asgard was separated from Jotunheim below, where the ancient gods known as the Vanir lived. A bridge, Bifrost (the Milky Way), crossed the space between the two realms.

Asherah

A Canaanite (*See* Canaanite) mother goddess—perhaps the same as Athirat (*See* Athirat)—Asherah was sometimes depicted as the wife of the creator god El. Associated with moisture, she is "Lady of the Sea" and well as "Mother of the Gods. Asherah is mythologically related to the Sumerian goddesses Ninhursag and Nammu and perhaps to the Egyptian

Isis. Asherah was also associated with the Tree of Life and was worshipped in groves. It is difficult to tell in the Hebrew scriptures (the Bible), whether Asherah is a goddess or a carved image. Images called *asherim* were placed on altars and in groves and even in the Jerusalem Temple of the Israelites. It is said that Asherah became a figure of Hebrew worship at the instigation of a Canaanite wife of King Solomon. Under King Ahab and *his* Canaanite wife, Jezebel, Asherah was worshipped along with her son Baal (*See* Baal). In spite of the efforts of Hebrew prophets to eliminate Asherah worship, that worship persisted among the Hebrews. What follows is the response of the people (in biblical book of Jeremiah, 44:1–28) to one of those attempts:

> We are not going to listen to what you tell us in
> the name of the Lord. We intend to fulfill all the
> vows by which we have bound ourselves: we
> shall burn sacrifices to the queen of Heaven and
> pour drink-offerings to her as we used to do, we
> and our forefathers, our kings and leaders, in the
> towns of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem. Then
> we had food in plenty and were content; no disaster
> touched us. But from the time we left off burning
> sacrifices to the queen of Heaven and pouring
> drink offerings to her, we have been in great want,
> and we have fallen victim to sword and famine.

As the "Queen of Heaven," Asherah was apparently believed to be the wife of the Hebrew god, Elohim/Yahweh.

Assyrians

The Assyrians were a Semitic people who settled in northern Mesopotamia late in the third millennium. In 1225 B.C.E. the Assyrians briefly took over Babylon. Later, in the first half of the first millennium, a period usually referred to as the Neo-Assyrian period, Assyrian power became particularly formidable The Assyrians defeated Israel in 721 and took away thousands of Israelites as slaves.

The Assyrians tended to absorb the mythologies of their neighbors and conquered subjects. The most important of the Assyrian gods, however, was the eponymous Assur. During the periods of Assyrian power, Assur assimilated the characteristics of many chief gods of the region. Several goddesses were considered Assur's wives. These include Ishtar and Ninlil.

Astarte

Called Ashtoreth in Hebrew, Astarte was a Canaanite (*See* Canaanite) goddess, possibly identical to the goddess Anath. Like the Sumerian-Babylonian Inanna-Ishtar, with whom Anath has connections, Asarte is the "Queen of Heaven." It was said that she was either the child of Asherah (*See* Asherah), like Anath, or simply an aspect of Asherah. In some Canaanite texts, Astarte rather than Asherah is called El's wife. Astarte was a particularly important figure in the Middle

East in general, with palace-temples at places such as Sidon and Byblos. She is associated with the sea, the moon, and the morning and evening stars. Asarte's mythological sisters include not only fertility goddesses such as Inanna-Ishtar but also Aphrodite (*See* Aphrodite) and Artemis in Greece, and Isis and Hathor in Egypt.

Athabascans

Athabascan-speaking peoples probably migrated from Central Asia via the Bering Straits perhaps as early as 35,000 years ago. There are many Athabascan-speaking tribes in Alaska and western Canada as well as in Southwest of the United States. The best known Native American Athabascans are the Navajo and the Apache peoples.

Athirat

Athirat was a Canaanite (*See* Canaanite) goddess close to the creator god El. She was perhaps his wife. It seems likely that Athirat is interchangeable with other Semitic (*See* Semites) such as Asherah (*See* Asherah) and Astarte (*See* Astarte), with ties to the Mesopotamian goddess Inanna (Ishtar). (*See* Part II; Canaanite)

Atlas

The Titan Atlas, after failing to defeat the Greek Olympian gods led by Zeus, was punished by being made to hold up the world.

Atman

In various branches of Hinduism (*See* Hinduism) the transcendent absolute essence of the universe, Brahman (*See* Brahman) is imminent everywhere as the Atman—the Self at the center of everything that is. If Brahman is the ultimate wholeness, Atman is the individual soul-like individuality that first took form as the primal being, Purusha (*See* Purusha).

Aton

The Aton (Aten), represented by the solar disk, was the focus of the sun cult taken up by the Egyptian pharaoh Amenhotep IV, who later renamed himself Akhen*aton* (Akhenaten) in honor of the Aton. Because he and his queen Nefertiti are said to have worshipped the Aton above all other gods, he is called by some the father of monotheism. (*See* Part II; Egyptian).

Atum

At the ancient Egyptian cult center of Heleopolis, Atum was the creator god. He created the world from within himself, using his own bodily fluids. He was originally an androgyne, containing the potential for both male and female. Atum was the progenitor of Geb and Nut (Earth and Sky), and, therefore, is the ancestor of the deities Osiris, Isis, Seth, and Nephtys. Later assimilated with the sun god Re (Ra), he became in the Old Kingdom the dominant high god Re-Atum or Atum-Re. (*See* Part II; Egyptian)

Atum-Re

Atum-Re is one of the many combinations of high gods in Egyptian mythology. For some the combination of Atum (*See* Atum) and the solar god Re (Ra) represented the setting sun. (*See* Part II; Egyptian).

Avalokitesvara

Avalokitesvara, the all-knowing and all-seeing is a bodhisattva of compassion, originating in Northern India and achieving particular dominance in Tibetan Buddhism (*See* Part II; Tibetan). He has 11 heads, a thousand eyes, and a thousand arms, and is able to respond simultaneously to suffering everywhere. This bodhisattva is a *de facto* deification of the compassionate aspect of the Buddha (*See* Buddha) himself. As such, he is, in fact, worshipped, especially in Tibet. Avalokitesvara has close associations with the Amida (Amitabha) Buddha of Japanese Pure land Buddhism (*See* Buddhism). He is the guardian of the world between the Buddha Sakyamuni and the Buddha to come. The worship of Avalokitesvara as Guanyin (Kuan-yin, Kannon in Japan) was introduced into China as early as the 1st century C.E., where this bodhisattva is sometimes male, sometimes female. In Tibet, where he was introduced in the 12th century, Avalokitesvara is sPyan-ras-gzigs or Chenrei—"He with the look of Pity." Tibetan mythology holds that Avalokitesvara was the progenitor of the Tibetans and was the first Tibetan sovereign. So it is that he is reincarnated in each Dalai Lama, who traditionally lives, like Avalokitesvara himself, on a mountain top (Potala) from which the cries of suffering humanity can be heard. In Mongolia Avalokitesvara is "The One Who Watches." In Southeast Asia he is "Lord of the World." The bodhisattva has a female counterpart or *shakti* (*See* Shakti) in Tara (*See* Tara), who is particularly popular in Tibet as a savior goddess. One myth says that Tara was born from a compassionate tear shed by Avalokitesvara. (*See* Buddhism, Part II; Bon).

Avesta

The *Avesta* is the sacred text of Zoroastrianism. Much of it, based on earlier Aryan roots, pre-dates the Zoroastrian reforms of the old Iranian religion and has been lost. The *Avesta* is dominated by the *Yasna* ("Sacrifice"), verses meant to be used for sacrifice rituals. In the *Yasna* are the famous *Gathas*, songs said to have been written by Zarathustra (Zoroaster), containing his essential philosophy. The *Avesta* also contains the *Yasts*, hymns that retell many of the mythic stories of the religion. (*See* Pahlavi Texts, Part II; Zoroastrian).

Awonawilona

Awonawilona is the original creator in the mythology of the southwestern American Zuni people. He existed before anything else in the original void and conceived himself by thought. He became the sun that brought people light, warmth, and water.

Axis Mundi

The *axis mundi* (world axis) is a mythological term that appears in all parts of the world. It refers to the given culture's understanding of the center of the world, the place where Heaven and Earth and/or the Four Directions meet. In emergence creation myths the place of emergence is the axis mundi. For ancient Greeks, Delphi, the place of the oracle of Apollo, was the world omphalos (navel). The world tree—a central pillar that connects

the upper and lower realms of creation, can be the axis mundi, as in the case of the Norse world tree, Yggdrasill, or the Bodhi Tree, under which the Buddha achieved Enlightenment. The world tree as axis mundi may be represented by other objects such as, for Christians, the cross on which Jesus was crucified, or for some Hindus, the *linga* or phallus of the god Shiva, that like a great pillar, stretches from Hell to Heaven. The axis mundi can also be feminine. When the linga of Shiva is connected with the *yoni* (the vulva of the ultimate mother—creation itself) of the Hindu goddess, it becomes in a sense the umbilical chord that connects Heaven and Earth.

Aymasune

The Yurucare of Bolivia say that the Demon Aymasune sent down a great fire storm to destroy humanity soon after the original creation.

Baal

Baal is the dominant god in Canaanite mythology. Baal, like Adonis, means "Lord." His father was a weather or storm god Dagan, creator-high god El.. Baal has an archetypal relative in the Babylonian god Marduk, who, like him, gained his dominant position among the gods by defeating the primal powers of water—the sweet waters personified by Apsu and the sea waters that were Tiamat. Baal defeats the Sea as the god Yam, sometimes called Lotan the Serpent, reminding us of the Hebrew Yahweh's defeat of Leviathan. Whatever his form, Baal's defeat of the water powers is clearly tied to the climatic and agricultural processes of the Middle Eastern year. By defeating the monster Yam, Baal was able to determine the flow of waters—that is, rain.

Baal's ultimate battle was with Death (Mot). When Mot appeared to have defeated him, he descended to the depths of his rival's underworld kingdom, and the result on Earth was drought and devastation.

It was Baal's sister, Anat, who saved the day by herself descending, like the Mesopotamian Inanna-Ishtar, to the dark underworld and splitting death in two, grinding him up, and sowing him as animistic seed. The harvest resulting from that planting was the resurrection of Baal and the return of life and fertility to Earth—literally, the re-creation of life. (*See* Part II; Babylonian, Cannanite, Part III; Animistic Creation, Dismemberment of Primordial Being as Creation, Sacrifice in Creation).

Baatsi

Baatsi is the first man of the creation of the Efe people of the Congo. With help from the moon, the Supreme Being made Baatsi out of clay, which he covered with skin and filled with blood. With his wife he reminds us of the biblical Adam and Eve (*See* Abassi, Obassi, Part II; Hebrew)

Babylonians

By he second millennium B.C.E. migrating Semites (*See* Semites) became a powerful element in Mesopotamia, where they dominated the Sumerians (*See* Sumerians), and in the Levant (now Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Israel, and Palestine). In

Mesopotamia they established a capital, Babylon, in what had once been Akkad, the capital of an earlier Semitic group, the Akkadians. Under King Hammurabi (c. 1792–1750 B.C.E.), who greatly expanded Babylonian power and territory, they developed a unifying code of laws and printed it on the famous column at Susa for all to see. Perhaps the world's first written code of laws, it is known as "Hammurabi's Code." Old Babylonia, as it is now called, was invaded and defeated by the Hittites, Indo-Europeans (*See* Indo Europeans) from the northwest in 1600 B.C.E.

Under King Nebuchadnezzar II (605–562 .B.C.E.) of the Chaldean Dynasty, Babylon once again dominated the Middle East during the neo-Babylonian era. This was the period of the Hanging Gardens of Babylon and of significant astronomical advancement as well as of a revival of Babylonian religion and mythology that reached back to the ancient Sumerians. It was also the period of the Babylonian Captivity, or Exile of the Hebrews (*See* Hebrew Mythology, Judaism).

Although Babylonian mythology maintained connections with old Mesopotamian religion, the great Babylonian creation epic, the *Enuma elish* (*See* Enuma elish) indicates just how far they had moved from the old traditions, reflecting a movement from cultural principles centered on fertility and the balance of male and female roles, to a much more patriarchal and hierarchical perspective such as that which was emerging, for instance, among the Hebrews and that has equivalents in the predominance of Zeus (*See* Zeus), Odin, and other Indo European sky gods (*See* Indo European, Part II; Babylonian, Sumerian)

Bamboo Son and Stone Son

Bamboo Son and Stone Son are the creative twins of the creator in the Yami mythology of Taiwan. The creator dropped a stone on the place that would become a Yami village, and a person called Stone Son emerged from the stone. When the creator looked at a piece of bamboo, it became Bamboo Son. Out of the knees of these twins came the first real humans.

Banba

Banba was one of the four queens who symbolized Irish sovereignty in the Irish origin story.

Batara Guru

In the pre-Islamic Batak mythology of the Indonesian island of Sumatra, Batara Guru was the creator of Earth and the first ancestor of humans. Boru Deak Parudjar, the daughter of Batara Guru, dives from the heavens into the primordial sea, and the god sends a bird down with soil to make land for his daughter and to serve as a place to plant the seeds of creation.

Beaver Girl and Snail Boy

In the creation myth of the North American Osage people, it is said that the first people came from a union between two animals, Beaver Girl and Snail Boy. According to the story, Beaver Girl and Snail Boy produced a son and a daughter that were neither snail nor beaver, but Osage.

Bhagavadgita

"The Blessed Lord's Song," the *Bhagavadgita* of India, was composed about two thousand years ago and is part of the epic the *Mahabharata* (*See* Mahabharata). The *Gita* is often consulted as a source of truth and wisdom. The source of the wisdom contained in poem is the Lord Krishna (*See* Krishna), who, as an incarnation of the god Vishnu. Krishna essentially reveals himself as the personal embodiment of supreme primal power, Brahman (*See* Brahman). He appears to Arjuna as the container of every kind of place and being, of the gods themselves, even as Time and the Universe itself. He is the universal poet who contains the whole story of creation and existence within himself.

Bhagavan

Bhagavan is the name of the creator of the Gond people in India. At the beginning of time he sat in the primeval waters on a lotus leaf and used a fleck of dirt to create a crow that would seed the earth.

Bible

The *Bible* (<Greek *biblia* for "books") is a collection of stories and commentaries made up of the Jewish *Torah* ("Law") or first five books, as well as Prophets and Writings; what Christians call the Old Testament and the New Testament, composed of the four Gospels or biographies of Jesus and the interpretive writings of various followers of Jesus, especially those of Paul (the former Saul), a primary missionary of the new religion to non-Jews. The Bible contains the canonical myths—the generally accepted sacred stories of Judaism and of Christianity, Christians subscribing to all of the biblical stories, Jews accepting only those of the Old Testament. Muslims, who consider themselves, like Jews and Christian, People of the Book" (Bible), accept most of the biblical stories as prophetic revelation. (*See* Part II; Christian, Hebrew, Islamic)

Black Hactcin

See Hactcin

Boar

The ancient *Taittiriya Samhita* and *Satapatha Brahmana* of India tell how the creator Prajapati (*See* Prajapati) became a boar and spread out the earth, which then gave birth to many gods. In the *Vishnu Purana* and *Kalika Purana*, the god Vishnu, in association with Brahma, is the earth-diver creator who, in the form of the Great Horned Boar, saves Earth by raising her from the primordial waters on his phallic tusk.

Bochia

The ancient Muysca of Peru and Colombia believed in a creator sun god, Bochia, a very old bearded man who, like a culture hero, taught them about planting and rituals and also brought about a great flood.

Bomong

In the creation myth of the Minyong people of northern India, Bomong is a female personification of the sun.

Bon

Bon (Bonpo) is the indigenous pre-Buddhist religion of Tibet It is a shamanistic and animistic religion and mythology

that has influenced Tibetan Buddhism. (*See* Part II; Bon)

Book, The

The Book is a term often used interchangeably with the Bible (*See* Bible). The phrase "People of the Book" usually refers to followers of the three Abrahamic (*See* Abraham) or monotheistic (*See* monotheism) religions—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—all of whom revere parts of or all of the Bible.

Book of Invasions

A particularly important source for Irish mythology is a compilation known as the *Leabhar Gabhala Eireann* (*The Book of the Taking of Ireland* or, more commonly, *The Book of Invasions*). The Irish mythological narratives were first written down in the spoken language of the Irish, but were later adapted into the Latin alphabet by monks in the sixth century C.E. But many of these manuscripts were lost during Viking invasions, so that the primary sources for Irish mythology are manuscripts written by Irish monks beginning in the early twelfth century, a fact that means some of the stories are, in all likelihood, affected or corrupted by medieval Christian points of view. *The Book of Invasions* is based on parts of various manuscripts, especially the *Book of Leinster*, the *Lebhor na Nuachongbhala* or *Lebhor Laignech,* which is said to have been compiled by Aed Mac Crimthainn at the monastery at Terryglass in about 1150. The most complete version of the *Book of Invasions, however,* dates from the early 17th century. (*See* Part II; Irish)

Bor and Bestla

In Norse mythology Bestla, the daughter of the frost-giant Bolthor, was the mother of the gods Odin, Vili, and Ve, the gods sacrificed Ymir to create the world out of his body. Bor was Bestla's husband (*See* Norse Mythology below

Brahma

With Vishnu, "the preserver," and Shiva "the destroyer," Brahma forms a *trimurti*—a trinity of sorts in Hindu mythology. As the creator in the scripture known as the *Puranas*, he is derived from or is interchangeable with the creator god Prajapati of the ancient Vedic *Brahmanas*. *Brahma* is the masculine Sanskrit form corresponding to the neuter *Brahman*—the Absolute, the basis of the whole universe. Brahma, however, although an aspect of Brahman, is not Brahman. In fact, for many, Vishnu, rather than Brahma, is more likely to be seen as an embodiment of the Absolute. In one myth Vishnu is sleeping on the primal serpent Ananata (Vasuki, Sesa) in the primal ocean of milk—beyond time and out of space. Brahma, the first conscious deity, is seated on a lotus that emerges from Vishnu's navel. He has four faces and four arms that hold the sacred books—the *Vedas*—which existed even before creation and are the basis of his authority to create. In the post-Vedic *Laws of Manu*, Brahma creates a cosmic golden egg (*arbhiranyagha*) from his seed. After a time in the primordial waters, Brahma takes form from the egg as the cosmic man Purusha. Other means used by Brahma for creation include copulation, masturbation, and creation by thought. Sometimes the elements of

creation develop animistically from dismembered or sacrificed parts of his body. Brahma's wife is Sarasvati, who, in the *Rig Veda,* is the primal Word or Vac—that is, the articulation of the Creator or his creation. She is the mother of the *Vedas.* (*See* Part II; Indian)

Brahman

For many Hindus, Brahman is the Absolute, the essence of anything that is. Brahman is neither male nor female and is everywhere and nowhere. In the Vedic hymns the neuter noun *brahman* refers to the power of the word and a *brahman* is a member of the priestly caste who understands the word. In the sacred texts, the *Upanisads,* Brahman is the eternal first cause, the ultimate unknowable mystery or riddle of the universe. The closest one can come to revealing what Brahman is, is to say or write the sacred syllable, "Om." Brahman can be incarnated in Brahma and Vishnu, and Shiva, and when the Absolute takes no form there is no existence. To put it another way, everything that *is* owes its existence to Brahman. In this sense Hinduism is ultimately monotheistic or monistic, if not monotheistic, all gods being aspects of Brahman. (*See* Monalatry, Monism, Monotheism).

Brahmanas

Elements of Hindu writing designated as *sruti* or sacred, each of the four Vedas (*See* Vedas) is attached one or more *brahmana*, theological commentaries in prose. They describe certain rituals and myths, then provide explications or *arthavadas*. The religion of the *Brahmanas* is one centered on rites of sacrifice rather than on the gods themselves. *Aranyakas* and *Upanisads* can be thought of as extensions of the *Brahmanas.* The Brahmanas, however, contain several versions of the Indian creation myths featuring the creator as Prajapati (later Brahma). (*See* Brahma, Prajapati, Part II; Indian).

Brahmans

Brahmans (brahmins) are priests, the highest caste in Hindu India. Their primary duty is to see that proper rituals and rules—especially those spelled out in the *Brahmanas*—are followed and properly executed. An individual brahman is the earthly counterpart of Brhaspati, the priest among the gods. (*See* Brahmanas, Part II; Indian).

Buddha

"Buddha" or "The Buddha" is a name generally applied to the Buddha Sakyamuni, Gautama Buddha, the highly influential sage who lived in India some 2500 years ago and was the de facto founder of Buddhism. Shakyamuni is the family name of the Buddha, whose father was a king of the Shakyas. The Buddha is sometimes referred to simply as "Shakyamuni." Siddhartha in Sanskrit (Siddhatta in Pali) was his personal name, a name that suggests the idea of the *siddha,* one who has achieved perfection, namely Enlightenment.

A *buddha* is a person who has moved from the stage of pre-enlightenment (*arhat*) to that of having been awakened to ultimate reality and truth. The Sanskrit term *buddhi* conveys the sense of special intelligence or knowledge. Although the term "the Buddha" usually refers to Gautama Buddha, there are other Buddhas.

The Pure Land Buddhists in Japan, for example, have their Amida Buddha.

Buddhism

For some, Buddhism is, in effect, a religion. For others it is a philosophy or a culture. There are so many kinds of Buddhism and so many contradictions within the overall tradition that it is almost impossible to define. There are two major paths or "vehicles" (*yana*) of classic Buddhism. The older Hinayana Buddhism or "Lesser Vehicle," so termed by the reformist Mahayana or "Larger Vehicle" Buddhists, is represented, for instance, by the Theravada and Sarvastivada sects that developed in India before the Common Era and have spread to various parts of the Asian continent. The Hinayana approach stresses the ideal of the *arhat*, the one who has attained the penultimate stage of enlightenment or nirvana. The much more numerous Mahayana groups stress the ideal of the bodhisattva, not as in the earlier stages of Gautama Buddha's movement towards Enlightenment, but as the person concerned with achieving Buddhahood only in some distant eon as he works compassionately in this world for the salvation of others. It should be noted that within the larger divisions of Hinayana and Mahayana are many diverse understandings and doctrinal divisions. Mahayana Buddhism in Tibet, for instance—Tibetan Buddhism—pays special attention to bodhisattvas who are, in effect, gods. In Japan, forms of so-called "Esoteric Buddhism" such as Zen Buddhism and Pure Land Buddhism stress a more intellectual perspective.

The common thread, of course, is *the* Buddha (*See* Buddha), Gautama Buddha. In most Buddhist sects there is the presence of certain of the Buddha's teachings or concepts—primarily the sense of selflessness (*sunyata*) achieved by way of inner searching—often in a monastic setting—and a goal of some sort of enlightenment or *nirvana*.

The original literature of Hinayana Buddhism is written primarily in the Middle India dialect of Sanskrit called Pali. The *Pali Abhidhamma Pitaka*, for instance, contains sermons (*suttas*) and Theravadan doctrine. The primary Mahayana scriptural form is the *sutra* (sermon of the Buddha), which is traditionally recited or chanted as a form of worship. The best-known of the sutras is probably *The Lotus Sutra* (the *Saddharmapundarika Sutra*), which has a strong narrative aspect and stresses the relationship of all people to the deeds of the Buddha himself.

The myths of Buddhism are associated with the life of Gautama Buddha and are found primarily in the Pali-language canon of the Theravada tradition in first century B.C.E. Sri Lanka, though stories have emerged from other traditions as well. Reports of the Buddha's life can be found in the *Buddhacarita,* or "Deeds of the Buddha," in Sanskrit (and in Tibetan and Chinese translations), a second century C.E. epic-like biography by the sage Asvaghosa.

The Theravidian *Tripitaka* is a collection of many *jatakas,* or birth stories of the Buddha's previous incarnations including the popular stories of his early life as a prince. (*See* Part II; Buddhist).

Bull Roarer

A bull roarer is an object used in Australian Aborigine ceremonies as well as in

shamanistic (*See* shamans) ceremonies in other parts of the world. It is a decorated wooden object with a hole at one end in which a hair string is stretched so that when the roarer is spun around it makes a mysterious buzzing or humming sound known by the Aborigines, for example, as "God's Voice." The bull roarer is typically used in ceremonies to ward off evil spirits or to cure the sick (*See* Part II; Arandan).

Bumba

Bumba is the creator god of the Bantu Bohongo people of Central Africa. He is said to have created the sun by vomiting it up.

Bundahishn

The *Bundahishn* is 12th century Zoroastrian (*See* Zoroastrian) sacred text in which we are told, among many other things, that in the beginning only an essential duality (*See* Duality) existed, represented by the good Ahura Mazda (*See* Ahura Mazda) and the evil Angra Mainyu (*See* Angra Mainyu).

Buninka

The Tungus people of northern China and eastern Siberia tell of a world that from the very beginning contained the devil, Bubinka, who challenged the creator's powers and failed.

Campbell, Joseph

Joseph Campbell (1904–1987) was the most influential American mythologist of the second half of the 20th century. Both a popularizer of the subject and a committed scholar, he was influenced by the works of psychiatrists Sigmund Freud and especially Carl Jung. Like Jung, he saw myths, whether Greek Norse, Native American, Egyptian, or Micronesian, as cultural masks of a universal human psyche. The patterns and universal tendencies of that psyche manifested themselves in all cultures as what Jung called "archetypes". In his influential *The Hero With a Thousand Faces,* Campbell applied archetypal theory to hero myths, from around the world, revealing a universal monomyth; a basic pattern for the story of the hero in its many cultural forms. (*See* Archetypes, Jung, Monomyth)

Canaanites

"Canaanite" is a term that has been used to identify the indigenous Semitic peoples of the "Land of Canaan" into which Hebrews migrated late in the second millennium. Major Canaanite centers along the Mediterranean coast grew up during the millennium—centers roughly contemporaneous with those of the Mycenaeans in Greece. Among the most important centers were those of the Phoenicians, who, among other things, are generally credited with having invented the alphabet. Some of the Canaanite centers grew out of ancient Stone Age settlements. Cities such as Ugarit and Byblos had, by the beginning of the third millennium, been carrying on active trade with Egyptians and Mesopotamians for centuries. Numerous tribes are listed in the Hebrew Bible (*See* Genesis 10:15–20) among the Israelite conquests in the Land of Canaan. According to one Genesis (9:18–22) myth, Kan'an was the son of Noah's son Ham who was cursed for having seen his father's genitals. Canaanites were said to have been the descendants of Kan'an. (*See* Part II; Canaanite, Phoenician)

Central Asian

"Central Asian" is a term used somewhat loosely depending on the purposes of the categorization. In terms of mythology, it can describe the Turkic, Mongolian people and others in the area of Siberia, including, for example, the Samoyeds, the Tungus (Evenks), Ostiaks, Voguls, Altaics Buriats, and Chukchees. Their creation mythology is often, though not exclusively, of the earth-diver type with the presence of devil or trickster figures and is a direct influence on the earth-diver mythology of many native North Americans. (*See* Part II; Altaic, Buriat, Chuckchee, Mongolian, Turkic)

Cesair

According to one highly Christian influenced Irish stories, the birth of Ireland began with the arrival on the island of Noah's (*See* Noah) granddaughter Cesair *before* the great flood. According to the Cesair myth, the flood destroyed all of these first invaders of the island that would become Ireland except for Cesair's husband Fintan (the "Ancient White One") who is said to have saved himself by becoming a salmon.

Chagan-Shukuty

In a Siberian creation myth the creator is helped by a being known as Chagan-Shukuty. Chagan-Shukuty can be a name for the Buddha. His presence reflects the influence of Buddhism (*See* Buddhism) on the original indigenous religion and mythology of the area.

Changing Woman

Changing Woman (sometimes called White Shell Woman and White bead Woman) is a major Apache and Navajo Holy Person, a goddess-like figure who is central to creation and to the female puberty myth and ritual known as the *kinaalda.* Changing Woman provides female humans with the capacity to give birth. It is said that one day First Man heard a baby crying and that he found the baby in a cradle made of rainbows. First Man then handed the baby to First Woman,. Now Talking God and House God came by to tell First man and First Woman how important this child was. And in two days the baby sat up, and in four she could walk. On the tenth day, the child was dressed in a white shell and was named White Shell Woman and also Changing Woman. She became a de facto culture hero, bringing fertility and regeneration to the world.. She also became the virgin mother, by the sun, of the sacred hero twins. It was a ray of Sun's light passing through the water of a waterfall that impregnated her. (*See* Part II; Apache, Navajo)

Chaos

In creation myths chaos is the primal void, the unformed material that perhaps contains the potential to become matter—creation—such as a cosmic egg or primal mound. It can be somewhat anthropomorphic, as in the case of the Greek poet Hesiod's Chaos, who at creation, gave birth to the earth goddess, Gaia, or it can be simply undifferentiated mass with no name or significance attached to it, as in countless other myths. (*See* Part III; Creation from Chaos, Cosmic Egg in Creation)

Chaos to Cosmos

The term "chaos to cosmos" is used by mythologists to represent the idea of

chaos (*See* Chaos), in the form of a cosmic egg, a primal mound, the void, the primordial waters, or simply undifferentiated potential, is turned in creation into the formal and interrelated entities that make up the world and the universe. Out of a tiny bit of mud at the bottom of the waters in the earth-diver creation, a world is formed; out of countless cosmic eggs in world mythologies, beings who become or supervise the creation of the world are born.

Christianity

Christianity emerged as a religion out of the Judaism of its founders, the followers of Jesus (the Greek form of the Aramaic/Hebrew Yeshua or Joshua), whom they believed to me the long-promised Jewish messiah, or savior. The New Testament, or Christian section of the Bible, and various non-canonical or apocryphal sources tell of Jesus of Nazareth, a Jewish reformer and itinerant teacher/preacher whose god and father was believed to be the God of the Jews (and later the same god as the Allah of the Muslims). For the Christians, God's loving purpose of overcoming the original sin of Adam and Eve in the Hebrew creation, was accomplished by Jesus, a figure eventually seen by the Christian church as both fully human and fully an aspect of God, who allowed himself to be sacrificed in the place of a humanity much in need of salvation.

In the Doctrine of the Trinity, perhaps reflecting the Indo European concept of the triadic deity, God took form as the Father Creator, as the Redeeming Son (Jesus), and as the Sanctifying Holy Spirit. The Christian God as Father, like the god of the Jews, was popularly depicted as fully male with no feminine component. Non-Christians, observing the religion from outside, might well suggest, however, that Christians—especially of the Catholic tradition—would, over the centuries, restore something of the feminine to godhead through the esoteric understanding of Sophia, or Divine Wisdom, and especially through the veneration of the person of the Virgin Mary, the mother of Jesus, who was said to have conceived her child by the Holy Spirit with no loss of virginity.

As it evolved, Christianity incorporated various aspects of Middle Eastern and Greek mythology, especially in relation to dying god and hero motifs and that of the Mother goddess. Christianity is a religion that looks back to its Jewish roots, but in so doing it expands the possibility of redemption by extending the kingdom and the Promised Land beyond the Hebrew race, Jewish religion, or Land of Canaan to the world at large in which a spiritual promised land, the "New Jerusalem," can be anywhere among any people.

Although the early Christians, given their Jewish roots, incorporated the Genesis creation into their mythology, they were also strongly influenced by Greek philosophy. This fact is evident in the prologue to the Gospel of John (1:1–18), the fourth book of the New Testament. Echoing the stoics and especially the ideas of the first century Jewish philosopher Philo Judeas, John uses the Greek term *logos* to express the first act of creation. For Philo and the Greeks, beginning with Heraclitus in the sixth century B.C.E., the logos was the ordering force of

the universe—divine wisdom or reason—the power that turned chaos into cosmos in the beginning.

John identifies Jesus with the logos (the "Word"), indicating the presence of Jesus with God and as God from the beginning of time, thus asserting Jesus' preeminence among all prophets. *Genesis* begins with the words, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." John clarifies this understanding with the words, "In the beginning the Word [the logos] already was." And he continues, "The Word was in God's presence, and what God was, the Word was. He was with God at the beginning, and through him all things came to be; without him no created thing came into being." And later, "So the Word became flesh;" that is, was born into the world as Jesus, so that the world could, in effect, be created anew through the "flood-death" that was Jesus sacrifice, a death symbolized by the sacrament of Baptism in which the initiate metaphorically dies in the flood of the font and is born again into a new creation (see John, 1: 1–14). (*See* Part II; Christian, Hebrew)

Churning of the Ocean of Milk

The Indian *Vedas* and the epic *Mahabharata* (*See* Mahabharata), contain a creation story in which the churning of the primordial waters (*See* Primordial Waters) results in creation itself. Urged on by Vishnu, the gods and demons churn and beautiful elements of creation came from the waters. (*See* Part II; Indian)

Coatlicue

Coatlicue was the Aztec earth and mother goddess. She conceived the great sun and war god Huizilopochtli by means of a feather from Heaven. Murdered by her already living children, she was quickly avenged by her newborn son. (*See* Part II; Aztec).

Condor

Condor is the Noah (*See* Noah) figure of the great flood in the mythology of the northern California Wyot people. He also appears in a Yokut creation. In the Wyot myth he survives the great flood with his sister in a basket. He and his sister become the parents of the first people (*See* Part III; Incest in Creation).

Corn Mother

Mother Corn, Grandmother Corn of Corn Mother, is a popular figure among the indigenous corn-eating people of Native North America. It is she who, acting as a culture hero, leads the people to the new crop. In some cases it is she who must be sacrificed and planted in the earth as the seed for the new life giving plant. Corn Mother is, in effect, an earth goddess.

In New England, the Wabanaki Corn Mother had blond hair like corn silk. Some of the Iroquoian people say that Corn Mother, as Earth Mother, was the mother of the Creator, and that when she died, corn grew from her breasts, beans and squash from the rest of her body. The Arikara people of the Great Plains tell of the murdered Corn Mother from whose body corn grew. The Keresan people of the Southwest say that Corn Mother planted her heart in the earth and said that corn would be the milk of her breasts.

A Cherokee myth concerns Kanati, a hunter who went into the woods to hunt game for his little boy and his wife Selu

("Corn"). One day Selu was washing some of the meat brought in by her husband when some of its blood fell on the ground and became a little boy, whom the family took in as a second son. Kanati brought in huge amounts of meat, so one day the two boys decided to follow him into the forest to see how he was so successful as a hunter. Hiding behind a tree, they watched the hunter push a great slab away from a cave mouth and shoot a deer that emerged. The boys waited for several days and then returned on their own to the cave. They pushed the stone aside and watched in horror as large numbers of animals escaped. And from that day on, the animals have hidden in various places in the woods so that they are much more difficult to find.

Then the boys spied on their mother. They were disgusted to see that she produced beans and corn by rubbing her stomach and armpits. Thinking their mother was a witch they decided to kill her. Understanding this, Selu agreed to be killed and instructed the boys to bury her body and to keep watch over it for a night. The boys did this and the next day corn had gown up ready to be harvested.

When people from far off heard of this miracle they came to visit the boys. The boys gave them kernels to plant but explained that the people must keep watch over the seeds every night during the seven days of their journey back home. Of course, the people fell asleep on the seventh night and now corn grows much more slowly than it did for the original sons of Corn Mother Selu.

The Penobscot people of Maine say that First Mother asked to be sacrificed and became corn, the food of her people. So it is that the people eat corn and remember the dying goddess who sacrificed herself for them. (*See* Part II; Mandan, Mohawk, Pawnee, Penobscot).

Cosmic Egg

In many creation myths an egg or seed that emerges mysteriously from the void of the cosmos is the source of creation—the element in chaos with the potential for differentiation and creation. Such myths exist in China, Japan, Egypt, Borneo, Finland, Greece, and Tibet, for example, and especially India, as, for instance, in the myth of Brahma, The analogy between cosmic birth and earthly birth can be made here. (*See* Part II; Indian).

Cosmogony

A *cosmogony* is a story of the creation. The English word refers to the Greek *kosmogonia* (<-gonos, derived from the word for "producing" and *kosmos* meaning cosmos, universe, or world). Each cosmogony provides a given culture with a sense if itself and its importance by establishing it under divine protectorship at the center of the world. A culture's "cosmogony" is a "creation myth" to others. (*See* Introduction)

Cosmology

A cosmology (< Greek *kosmologia* = study of the universe) is the way a culture sees the essential arrangement of the universe—the place of the stars, of the underworld, of Heaven and Earth. By extension, it is the academic and scientific study of the cosmos as a system.

Cosmos

In the largest sense, the cosmos is the Universe seen as an organized system of interrelated parts. In the more particular

sense of creation myths, it is the result of the movement away from Chaos and reflects every individual's and every culture's hopes for order. Most creation myths, with their stories of the fall and the Flood, suggest, as science does, and as human experience proves, that Cosmos is under constant pressure from Chaos—entropy.

Coyote

A presence in hundreds of Native North American myths, Coyote, like his actual animal counterpart, is present in most regions of North America. With the Spider Ananse in Africa and fellow Native Americans Iktome (like Ananse, the Spider), and Raven, Coyote is an example of the archetypal trickster. He is many things at once, He is clever and foolish, creative and destructive, other-worldly and worldly, a community-based being and a loner. His appetites for sex and food are limitless, and he recognizes no taboos. He is a braggart and sometimes the ridiculous butt of his own jokes and tricks. But he is also an amazingly powerful shape-shifter, capable of changing instantly from one form to another—animate or inanimate. Occasionally, like somewhat devilish trickster figures in many Central Asian creation myths, Coyote assists the creator with his work; sometimes, like the Asian figures, he undermines the creation.

Like most tricksters, Coyote can also be a culture hero. A Papago "Noah's Ark" myth tells how Coyote saved himself and the Indian people just after the their emergence into the world by warning their chief to build a huge canoe before the deluge he, because of his closeness to the Creator, knew was coming.

Coyote's and other tricksters' positive modern day descendants might be shamans and medicine people; his negative analogues bad witches. His constructive social and at the same time comic role is reflected in the clowns and their whipping boys in the Southwest pueblo dances, men who break religious and cultural taboos during ceremonies but who also punish members of the community who have strayed from the ceremonial-based path. (*See* Trickster).

Cozaana and Huichaana

According to Mesoamerican Zapotec tradition, Cozaana and Huichaana were male and female manifestations of the creator. Cozaana, the sun god, created the land animals, and Huichaana, the goddess of water, created people and the water creatures.

Creation

Creation is the act of creation as well as its result—the differentiated cosmos and world. The people of particular cultures speak of "the creation." We all live in what some would call "Creation" itself (*See* Cosmogony).

Creationism

Creationism is a religious belief in the creation of the Universe—including humans and the earth—by a personal God (Yahweh-God-Allah in the Abrahamic traditions). Creationists tend to be literal believers in the creation story of the biblical Book of Genesis. Typically they believe, therefore, that the earth and humans were created only a few thousand years ago, discounting the studies of modern science. In recent times the term "creationism" has been applied particularly to

Christian fundamentalists who reject the theory of evolution by natural selection. There are also creationists who adhere to a belief in Intelligent Design, attempting to avoid the creationism-evolution problem by simply stating, again, in defiance of the findings of science, that the Universe in all its intricacy has to have been consciously designed by a divine creator. Intelligent Design advocates argue that Intelligent Design should be taught in schools as a science along with or in place of evolution.

Culture Hero

Most cultures have culture heroes. Sometimes in creation myths the culture hero helps the creator. More often he teaches religious rules and ceremonies and establishes the community's institutions and traditions after creation. In short, he is the hero who brings culture. Jesus, Muhammad, Moses, and the Buddha are culture heroes in that they teach their cultures the proper way to organize their lives, how to achieve Cosmos out of Chaos. The Mbuti people of Zaire credit their culture hero Tore with, like the Greek Prometheus, stealing fire and introducing it to them. Sometimes the culture hero has trickster qualities and even introduces death, as in the case of the Maidu version of Coyote.

In matrilineal cultures the culture hero can be female. It is the sisters Iatiku (Life-Bringer) and Nautsiti (Full Basket) who teach their culture to the Acoma people of the American southwest.

The culture hero is almost always endowed with special power as a result of divine origins. Like other monomythic heroes, the culture hero can be conceived miraculously. So the mother of the famous Nanabozho of the Menomini tribe was impregnated by the wind, and the mother of the Tewa Waterpot Boy was made pregnant by a bit of clay that entered her as she stomped on material for the making of pots.

Culture heroes like the Okanagan hero, for example, not only institute culture, they make cultures safe by killing monsters. After establishing customs and making the world safe, the culture hero usually disappears, sometimes descending to death or the underworld, like the Ceramese culture heroine Hainuwele in Indonesia. The culture hero can die and be changed into food, like the Inuit Sedna or the ubiquitous Native American Corn Mother. The culture hero in one way or another nourishes the culture and in some sense literally *is* the culture. (*See* Part II; Ceram, Okanagan).

Cumong

Cumong is a divine hero of the Korean creation story. As the Good Archer, after a crack appeared in Chaos so that the sky and earth could be separated, the archer shot down one of two suns and one of two moons before humans were made from Earth.

Dagan

Dagan (Dagon) was a name of the Canaanite creator. Perhaps a personification of El (*See* El), he was associated with fertility aspects, and his name means "grain." Dagan was assimilated as the high god of the Philistines in the late second millennium.

Daiiru

The Munduruc of Brazil tell how the creator was assisted in the beginning by Daiiru, the armadillo.

Dao (Tao)

In China the *dao* (the Way) evolved from vacant space, which gave birth to the cosmos. (*See* Part II; Chinese). The *dao* became the basis for Daoism, one of the great philosophical or religious systems of China. Daoism suggests that an individual can use certain spiritual and physical disciplines to achieve the state of the immortals (*Xianren*). Some Daoists consider their founder, Laozi, a god.

David

David was the Hebrew-Israelite king who established his capital at Jerusalem. As a boy he emerged, like so many heroes, from obscurity by becoming a giant-killer, defeating the Philistine giant warrior Goliath with a slingshot.

Demeter

Demeter (Ceres in Rome) was a daughter of the early Greek gods, Kronos and Rhea. She was the goddess of crops and the fertile earth. By her brother, the high god Zeus, she gave birth to the beautiful Persephone, or Kore ("the maiden," the Roman Proserpina). Zeus had promised their daughter to their brother Hades (Aidoneus, Roman Pluto), the ruler of the underworld. This terrifying god took by force what he had been promised and Persephone became Queen of the Underworld. Her distraught mother allowed the earth to become barren until her daughter was returned to her for half of each year.

Deucalion and Pyrrha

See Pyrrha and Deucalion

Deus Faber

The *Deus Faber* (God the Maker) is a deity who creates the world using the methods of a craftsman. Medieval and Renaissance depictions of God the creator in the Christian tradition sometimes show the deity using a compass to mark out the new universe . . . In the Book of Job (38:4–5) Yahweh (*See* Yahweh) reminds Job He, Yahweh, had "laid the foundation of the earth and determined its measurements." Egyptian and Polynesian creation stories sometimes involve the creator deity as a potter, making humans out of clay. The creation myth of the Yuki Indians of California tells of a creator who works as if he were essentially a tent maker. (*See* Part II; Yuki, Part III; Deus Faber Creation).

Devi

Although Hindus have the *trimurti* of Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva, it is Devi who, in practice, joins Vishnu and Shiva as one of the three most important *bhakti,* or devotional deities in India. Some would say that she is the most important divinity, the fullest embodiment of the absolute, Brahman (*See* Brahman). In the *Markandeya Purana*, in which many of Devi's myths appear, we find the *Devimahatymya*, in which the origin of the goddess is described. It seems that the world was being threatened by a gigantic water buffalo bull monster named Mahisa. He was king of the *asuras*, who had conquered Heaven. Following Brahma, the gods take refuge with Vishnu and Shiva, and, with Vishnu and Shiva, project their angry energy in the form of sheets of light, from which Devi emerged as the ultimate feminine principle, the Life Energy itself, the original *Shakti*, (*See* Shakti) the energy without which even Shiva is nothing material. Devi can, in fact, be worshipped as Shakti.



Durga slaying the buffalo demon, Raktabij, and Kali lapping up the demon's blood, Chamba painting. (© Brooklyn Museum/Corbis)

Devi takes many forms. She is the avenging warrior goddess, Durga who kills the primeval monster and saves the world. It is the world that concerns Devi; as the blood-thirsty Kali, she brings disease, war, and destruction, because death and destruction are necessary to the cycle of life. Devi is for the most part benevolent. Sometimes she is the wife of Shiva as Parvati, Daughter of the Mountain. As Sati, she throws herself into her husband's funeral pyre, setting the example for Hindu wives. But Devi can also take form as Sri, or Lakshmi, the wife of Vishnu. The name Sri refers to prosperity and Vishnu to the sacrifice (*See* Sacrifice), indicating that prosperity and sacrifice cannot be separated. In the *Mahabharata,* Lakshmi is incarnated as Draupadi, the wife of the Pandava brothers, and in the *Ramayana* she is Sita, the loyal wife of the Vishnu avatar Rama. (*See* Hindu Mythology).

Devil

The word "devil" comes from the Greek *diabolos,* meaning "slanderer." In the Judeo Christian tradition the Devil is Satan (*See* Satan), the tempter in the book of Genesis. Taking the form of the Serpent in the Garden of Eden, he tempts Eve to eat forbidden fruit. Islam, too, recognizes the Devil as Iblis or Shaitan. Various traditions as to the Devil's role and origins exist in the three Abrahamic religions. As Lucifer or Beelzebub he is the leader of

fallen angels jealous of God's creation of humans—the angels who are thrown into Hell. In Judaism he is *ha-satan*—the obstacle who can stand between humans and God as a tester. He points to inherent human weakness and evil, even acting as a kind of servant of God. In the Book of Job, for example, he challenges God to allow him to reveal the evil in God's loyal follower, Job, a challenge God accepts. In Islam an evil person can be a *shaitan.* In Christianity, the Devil, who tempts Jesus in the Wilderness also constantly tempts all human beings.

Devil-like figures exist in most traditions. In Central Asian mythologies the Devil is often a servant or assistant to the Creator—much as he is in the Job story. But he is a disruptive assistant who in various ways undermines creation by malicious acts or by foolishly attempting to outdo the primary deity as a creator. In Native North American mythology the trickster who undermines creation sometimes plays a similar role. In Zoroastrianism, Angra Mainyu is the negative force opposed to the positive Ahura Mazda. In Buddhism, Mara the Fiend, who tempts the Buddha under the Bodhi Tree, is a kind of devil.

In a very general sense, the devil is an archetypal figure that represents a force for negativity and evil. Since the Creator knows about the devil and allows the devil's negative activities, it can be said that there is an assumption in most traditions that evil is as inherent in us as goodness. The devil, in whatever form it takes or by whatever name it goes, is a metaphor for a destructive narcissism, an inflated ego, that turns the psyche away from progress towards true self-awareness or wholeness. The struggles between God and the Devil and between human heroes and the Devil are a projection of a universal struggle between the elements of the psyche that support the individual's quest for wholeness and the elements—the obsessions, the addictions, the egotistic drives—that stand in the way.

Dievs

In Baltic mythology, the term *dievs* (or *dievas*) is derived from the Indo European roots of *god* and *sky,* the same roots that give us *deus* and Zeus. The dievs were sky gods and thunder god sometimes related to astral bodies. The term is also used as the name of a particular creator who seems to have developed from a representation of the sky, to a personification of the sky, and then to a personal god. He is often depicted as a well dressed farmer, with overcoat and mittens, whose farm is in the heavens (*See* Part II; Baltic)

Dionysos

Dionysos (sometimes Zagreus, Bacchus to the Romans) was the son of the supreme Greek high god Zeus. In some versions of the story his mother was Persephone (*See* Demeter). But by most commentators, his mother was Semele, who, though depicted as mortal, seems to have had connections with an older moon goddess, Selene.

In the most common myth, Zeus disguised himself as a mortal and made love with Semele. Soon Semele became pregnant. Now Zeus's jealous wife Hera, disguised as an old woman, advised Semele to ask her nighttime lover to allow her anything she wished. Semele wished to see her lover in the light. In the throes



A depiction in the underground temple of Degaldoruva XVIII of two demons of the army of Mara, taken from the life of the Buddha. (© Charles & Josette Lenars/CORBIS)

of passion, Zeus agreed to give Semele whatever she wanted and she asked to see him. Zeus, who could never go back on his word, revealed himself to Semele and the young woman was destroyed by the power of the vision of the god. Her baby, however, was saved and sewed into Zeus's thigh, from which, three months later, the " twice-born" god was born. Later, Dionysos was said to have descended to the underworld in search of his true mother, Semele.

Dismemberment

The theme of creation from the dismemberment of primal beings or first parents is common in the mythologies of the world. Often the sacrificial victim is female. Mesoamerican mythology contains the story of the earth goddess Coatlicue, who was pulled to Earth by Quetzalcoatl and Tezcatlipoca and ripped apart to form earth and sky, her hair becoming plants, other parts of her body becoming other aspects of the natural world. The Babylonian myth of the defeat and dismemberment of the female primal deity Tiamat by the god Marduk is similar. In the Ceramese myth of Hainuwele, the young goddess-heroine is dismembered and planted leading to the springing forth of crops. The emergence of crops from a dismembered and planted goddess is common in the mythologies of Native North America, as, for instance, in the many myths of the Corn Mother.

The creative dismemberment creation myth finds its way into the Indo-

European tradition as well. In the Indian *Rig Veda* the primal man Purusha—in a sense the unformed universe itself—becomes the sacrifice out of whose dismemberment the rituals, the sacred words (*mantras*), the *Vedas,* and the world itself came: his mind became the moon, his eye the sun. The Norse myth tells how the world grew from the dismembered giant Ymir. And there are aspects of dismemberment in the early creation myths of the Greeks.

The dismemberment leading to world creation suggests a belief in animism—the presence of spirits in the elements of creation—all aspects of creation having come from the once living primal being.

Dismemberment plays a role in the myths of dying and resurrected man gods as well. Osiris is dismembered and thrown into the Nile; the Phrygian Attis is castrated. (*See* Animism, Corn Mother above, Part I; World Parent Creation. Part II; Babylonian, Mesoamerican, Norse)

Djanggawul

In the mythology of Eastern Arnheim Land in Aborigine Australia, Djanggawul and his two sisters were the myth time ancestors responsible for the creation process known as the Dreaming (*See* Dreaming, Part II; Yolugu)

Dobitt

Dobitt is the creator god of the Mosetene of the Bolivian rainforest. His home is Heaven.

Doondari

The creator god of the Fulani of West Africa is Doondari. According to some, the world was created from a drop of milk and Doondari came out of the milk and made a stone. The stone created iron, that in turn made fire, that in turn created water, that in turn made air. Then Doondari came down to Earth a second time and made a man.

Dreaming, The

The "Dreaming" is the term generally applied to a form of creation story that is essentially peculiar to the Aborigine cultures of Australia. According to this form, creation took place in a dreamtime—something like a mythological age—in which primordial beings such as Djanggawul (see above) and his sisters did walkabouts, giving birth to people, leaving sacred markings and objects, and establishing such societal structures as clans, totems, taboos, and rituals. A tribe's dreaming is its spiritual and original history. (*See* Part II; Australian Aborigine, Part III; Dreaming as Creation)

Duality

Duality is the tendency to see existence in terms of competing opposite forces in the world and the universe as a whole. God and Satan, good versus evil, spirit versus body. Are examples of duality. Many examples of duality exist in world mythology. The Zoroastrianism high god Ahura Mazda (the "Wise Lord") is pitted against his own negative creation, Angra Mainyu, in a universal cosmic struggle for dominance that directly affects the real experiences and struggles of humans.. In Christian mythology, Jesus stands as the creative force for good against the destructive tendencies of Satan and thus

continues the dualistic struggle recounted in the Bible's *Genesis,* the struggle between Yahweh and Satan for the souls of Adam and Eve. Sometimes duality is reflected in the war in Heaven—God and his followers against the Lucifer (Satan) and his fellow fallen angels, Zeus and the Olympians against Kronos and the Titans, the Norse Aesir versus the Vanir, Vedic-Hindu gods versus demons. The concept that good and evil and other opposites are inherent in creation itself is particularly well depicted in the many creation myths—especially among Central Asians and Native North Americans—of the devil/trickster who assists or copies the creator and in so doing usually undermines his work in some way. (*See* Part III; Duality in Creation)

Dying God

Occasionally the mysterious and tragic figure of the dying god appears in creation myths. Examples occur, for instance, in the Piman and Yuman creations of North America and in the Hainuwele myth of Indonesian Ceram. The theme of sacrifice is central to the Dying God archetype. In ancient Sumer the goddess Inanna herself and her consort Dumuzi enact a dying god rituals as does the sacred god-king-priest Osiris in Egypt. The Norse god Odin, hangs himself on the World Tree—the Axis Mundi—to learn the eternal truth of the runes. The Romans assimilated the year god Attis from Phrygia and practiced his rites of death and renewal in the spring. In Slavic Belorussia and Russia we find the dying and reborn Iarilo, "god of heavenly light," who rides on a white horse and wears a crown of flowers. Two pre-Christian dying god myths stand out in Europe. These are the myths of the Norse god Balder—the beautiful god, and the Greek god Dionysos.

The Dying God motif is closely related to the even more universal myth of the hero's descent into the underworld. Nearly always the dying god or hero's apparent death results in some kind of rebirth or resurrection or even, in one sense or another, a new creation or social system. Osiris, revived by his wife Isis, returned as his son Horus and as grain and the rejuvenated land after the annual Nilotic floods. In Ugaritic Canaan the dying god was Baal, the son of El or Dagan, who descended into the jaws of death (Mot) but who, with the help of the goddess Anat, returned and reestablished fertility for the land. In Phoenicia, Melgart, the city god of Tyre, was a dying and reviving god, as was Eshmun, the city deity of Sidon and Byblos. The best known of the Canaanite dying gods was Adonis, the spring god of the Phoenicians, who also became popular in Greece and Rome as a human with whom Aphrodite-Venus fell in love.

The Middle Eastern version of the Dying God motif is fully developed in the story of Jesus, who was said to have died and then to have returned to life after three days—one of them in hell—bringing the possibility of what might be called spiritual as opposed to physical fertility in a renewed creation. (*See* Part II; Ceram, Piman, Yuman).

Ea

See Enki

Eagle

In several Native North American mythologies Eagle plays an important role

in creation—usually, as in the case of the Californian Yokut, as the chief of a pre world-creation group of animals.

Earth-Diver

The Earth-Diver is the heroic figure, usually an animal, who in the many earth-diver creation myths of the world, is sent by the creator or creator surrogate into the depths of the primordial waters to find the bit of material—mud, sand, clay—out of which the earth will be created. In many cases the earth-diver dies in his/her attempt and achieves the stature of martyrdom for the cause of creation. (*See* Part I; Earth-Diver Creation, Part II; Onongaga, Seneca)

Earth Maker

Earth Maker is the translation generally used for the creators of the North American Winnebego and Pima peoples.

Earth Medicine Man

The Papago people of Arizona say that in the beginning there was only water and darkness everywhere but that out of that void First Man or Earth Medicine Man was born. It was Earth Medicine Man who created animals and the sun, moon, and stars.

Earth Mother

Earth Mother or Mother Earth, is most often found in creation myths simply an anthropomorphized Earth. Usually she is a world parent, married in some sense to Father Sky or simply Sky. In many myths, her children or rival deities separate her from sky, indicating a need for space in which a continuing creation can take place. Often the separation is violent. Earth is, logically enough, more concerned with her inhabitants than the distant Sky Father is. It is she who nurtures humans and it is in her that humans are buried at death. (*See* Geb and Nut, Great Mother, Separation of Heaven and Earth, World Parents)

Earth Starter

The creator of the Miadu people of California is usually called Earth Starter. His creation was somewhat undermined by the actions of the trickster, Coyote (*See* Coyote, Part II; Maidu).

Eddas

Perhaps derived from the Old Norse word for "poetry," an Edda is a collection of Norse writings in prose *or* poetry. Two Eddas are our primary sources for Norse mythology, including the Norse creation myth. In the 17th century in Iceland a 13th century manuscript, now known as the *Codex Regius,* contained a collection of mythical poems of the pre-Christian Viking period. The compilation of these poems was, for a time, attributed to Saemund Siugfusson and thus called *Saemund's Edda*. A few other mythological poems were discovered soon after the *Codex Regius* and the whole collection is known more commonly as the *Elder Edda* or simply the *Poetic Edda*. In this collection are the stories most used early in the 13th century by the Icelandic scholar and historian Snorri Sturluson in his collection known as the *Prose Edda.* Included in the *Poetic Edda* were e *Voluspa* (the Prophecy of the Seeress), containing the Norse creation story and the story of

Ragnorak, the end of the world. (*See* Part II; Norse)

Egyptian Mythology

Early Ancient Egypt, before the development of permanent settlements was a land populated by nomadic people speaking an Afro-Asiatic language of the Hamitic branch, distantly related to the Semitic languages. During the 4th millennium B.C.E., in what is now called the Pre-Dynastic period, these people formed communities by the Nile, developed agriculture, advanced agricultural tools, decorated pottery, and figurines.

The Pre-Dynastic mythology of Egypt can only be surmised by way of archeological remains, which indicate a belief in the afterlife and a sun god cult involving death and the setting sun. During the Late Pre-Dynastic (c. 3400 B.C.E.) large elaborately decorated and furnished tombs were built to house deceased people of status.

As royal dynasties under pharaohs were developed beginning in about 3100 B.C.E. hieroglyphic writing was developed and Upper and Lower Egypt were unified with a capital at Memphis (near modern Cairo) under the kingship of Narmer (c. 3110–3056 B.C.E.), or Aha, sometimes known as Menes. At this point an important element of Egyptian religion and mythology emerges. From Narmer on, Egyptian pharaohs would justify by a sacred association with the god Horus, represented by the emblematic falcon on one side of the slate palette—the so-called Narmer Palette—of the first monarch and the bull of kingly power on the other. By the end of the second Dynasty period North and South had once again been separated. But by about 2800 B.C.E. the kingdom was re-united with a new religion centered on the god Atum, or Re, at Heliopolis (also near Cairo). So began the period known as the Old Kingdom, in which the first of the great pyramids. The pyramid tomb of the third Dynasty king Djoser, was built at Saqqara (c. 2650 B.C.E.), followed soon after by the even more impressive ones at Giza, most notably that of King Kahfre (2558–2532 B.C.E.). This was also the period of the great Sphinx at Giza.

During the Old Kingdom (Dynasties 3 to 6, c. 2700–2190 B.C.E.) an Egyptian pantheon took form in the context of developed theologies. Over the centuries theologies and their particular versions of the pantheon would develop at several major cult centers. The generally dominant theology was that formulated by the priests at Heliopolis, but important interpretations came from Memphis, from Heracleopolis and Hermapolis and, briefly, Akhetaton (Amarna) further south, as well as from the major sites in deep Upper Egypt: Thebes (modern Luxor and Karnak), Abydos, Dendera, Esna, and Edfu.

Egyptian mythology is dominated by the theme of a sacred kingship and the related theme of death and the afterlife, often in relation to the role of the Nile in a cyclical process by which the land dies and is reborn. Underlying these themes is a tension between light and darkness—between the supreme solar deities, such as Re (Ra), and the god of Earth, fertility, and the underworld of death, Osiris. The Egyptians, as revealed in their myths, their rituals, their funerary writings, and their symbolic art and architecture were

preoccupied, more philosophically than the Mesopotamians, for instance, with questions of the nature of the universe and the relation of humans to the unknown. Their deities and their myths, highly symbolic vehicles for complex theologies, varied considerably in particulars according to the era and the cult center. But different centers assimilated each others' versions of deities and generally participated in what was a constant revisiting and revision of myths from very ancient times. The various local traditions had in common the central themes mentioned above and the highly philosophical and symbolic treatment of them.

The high god of Egypt was a creator god, usually associated with the sun. In Memphis, the first capital, he probably began as the falcon-headed sky-sun god Horus, the source of earthly kingship. Soon, however, he emerged in the highly complex Memphite theology as Ptah, the god of the primeval mound (Tatenen), who created by thinking things "in his heart" and then naming them with speech. His wife was the lioness goddess Sekhmet. Ptah's human form was that of a man in a cloak holding a scepter. Later he was identified with the pantheon of Khemenu, or Hermopolis (el-Ashmunein). The Hermopolitan pantheon, known as the Ogdoad ("The Eight"), was made up of four couples representing primordial chaotic forces. Amun (Amon) and Amaunet were forces of the invisible, Huh (Heh) and Hauhet (Hehet) were forces of infinity, Kuk (Kek) and Kauhet (Keket) were forces of darkness, and Nun and Naunet were the primordial waters. In Memphis, Ptah was equated for a time with Nun and Naunet, out of whom was said to have come the creator god Atum. Atum, in the theology usually thought of as the most orthodox, that of Heliopolis, was "the Whole One," the creator who contained male and female. He was the head and founder of the Ennead ("The Nine"). Atum produced Shu and Tefnut (Air and Moisture), the progenitors of Geb and Nut (Earth and Sky), in turn the parents of Osiris and Seth and their sister wives Isis and Nephtys. Horus as the son of Osiris and Isis was an added, tenth member of the Ennead.

During the Old Kingdom fifth Dynasty, Atum was displaced by or assimilated with the ancient sun god Re (Pre, Ra), the high god now becoming simply Re or Atum-Re or Re-Atum. As the center of the sun cult in later times, Re was Re-Harakhte ("Re-Horus of the Great Horizon"), the personification of the noonday sun, and was usually depicted as a human with the head of a hawk surmounted by a sun disk. The rising sun was Re as Khepri, the scarab. The evening sun was Re-Atum. Re assimilated the sacred king cult of Horus as indicated by Horus's title in the so-called Pyramid Texts of the fifth Dynasty as "Son of Re." Horus' mother in this configuration was Re's consort, the cow goddess Hathor, one of the most important of the ancient line of Egyptian goddesses. The Pyramid Texts were elaborate recordings in royal tombs of hymns, prayers, and lists that reveal much of Egyptian culture at the time, especially of the dominant cult surrounding death and the afterlife, a cult centered on the god Osiris. They also reveal a further accommodation of the solar and sacred kingship cults by describing the king as a god who guards Re in his daily trip across the sky in his solar bark.

The power of the god-king was being threatened by the middle of the millennium, however, by an increase in the influence of the priests and the noble class. With a partial decentralization of royal control came the rise of a kind of feudalism. By 2250, political anarchy threatened the state. The Old Kingdom came to an end, and the country broke into two kingdoms, with capitals at Memphis or Herakleopolis in the north (near modern Cairo) and Thebes (modern Luxor) in the south. At about the turn of the millennium, roughly coinciding with the fall of Ur in Mesopotamia, Egypt was reunited by the Theban king Mentuhotep under the high god Amun, thus beginning the Middle Kingdom.

During the Middle Kingdom (2050–1756 B.C.E.) under the new rulers based in Thebes, an assimilation of gods took place that included the still powerful Re. The Theban war god Montu merged with Amun, the Hermopolitan primal force of the invisible, and with the fertility god of the Coptos, the ithyphallic Min. To this mixture Re was added and Amun-Re came to the fore, especially at the Theban cult center of Karnak, as the sun god and King of Gods. Represented with a ram's head, Amun-Re was accompanied by his consort, the mother goddess Mut. Their son was the moon god Khonsu.

The invasion of Egypt in about 1750 B.C.E. by an Asiatic people referred to as "Hyksos," who conquered much of the country, essentially put an end to the Middle Kingdom and caused an intermediate period in Egyptian history. But with the defeat of the Hyksos in c. 1580 B.C.E. at the hands of a Theban Dynasty loyal to the god Amun-Re, the New Kingdom was born and a period of Egyptian expansion and artistic achievement followed under the leadership of Thutmose I and II; the latter's wife, Hatshepsut; Thutmose III; and especially Amenhotep III (1417–1366 B.C.E.), who extended the empire into parts of Mesopotamia and most of Canaan (modern Israel-Palestine and neighboring lands).

The successor to Amenhotep III was his son Amenhotep IV (1366–1347 B.C.E.), whose reign is known as the Amarna period because the pharaoh moved his capital to a new city near present day Amarna after disassociating himself from Amun-Re and renaming himself Akhenaton (Akhenati), in deference to the Aton, the solar god he looked to for support. Akhenaton is claimed by many as the father of monotheism. It is true that the pharaoh greatly favored the god from whose name he took his new name and the name of his new capital, Akhetaton (Amarna). The new religion would not last long, however. The probable son of Akhenaton and Nefertiti, Tutankhaton (c,1348–1339 B.C.E.), better known as "King Tut," changed his name to Tutankhamun to reflect a restoration of the Amun cult.

Hero myths such as those found in Greece or Rome or even Mesopotamia are not common in ancient Egypt. Heroism as such seems to be inextricably tied to the themes of sacred kingship in relation to the sun's journey across the sky and the idea of the king's and later any individual's passage after death to the underworld. At the center of what might be called the one Egyptian hero myth is Horus.

In a sense, the pharaoh, who lived as Horus, was always a god-hero who at death made the heroic journey to the sky

to join Re on his solar bark and to guard him against serpents and other perils there during the daily journeys from horizon to horizon. One of Horus's titles was "Son of Re," so that the pharaoh, like Horus himself, was the son of God to whom he returned after a sojourn on Earth. The myth of Horus justifies the sacred kingship. Horus is Osiris reborn. And Osiris' resurrection as Horus represents the possibility of any individual's succeeding on the traditional heroic journey into the underworld. *The Book of Two Ways* tells us that a dead person who has learned the proper spells of the first stage of afterlife will join the moon god Thoth as a star.

Thoth also plays the traditional role of the hero's guide in the afterlife. If he knows the second stage of spells the deceased will go to the underworld palace of Osiris. And if he learns the third stage spells he will accompany Re on his bark across the sky; in short, he will go to the "Father in Heaven." Egyptologist R.T. Rundle Clark supports this concept of the heroic pilgrimage of the soul after death when he points out that the Coffin Texts assumed "the soul's visit to Osiris at the end of the journey or a series of initiations during which the Horus soul-figure has acquired the superlative qualities of a hero—might, glory, strength, power and divinity." Clark goes on to compare Osiris to the Fisher King of Arthurian lore whose wound must be cured by the words—in this case the proper spells—of the grail hero (Clark, 161–162).

Osiris, the first son of Earth and Sky, was perhaps the most important of Egyptian deities. He stands at the very center of the most characteristic themes of ancient Egyptian mythology and culture. As the first mythical king of Egypt—literally a god-king, and as the source—the father—of the king-god Horus, he was the theological basis for the eternal and sacred kingship and for the Egyptian state itself. The pharaoh died as Osiris and was resurrected as his son Horus. As the dying god who was resurrected and who became king of the underworld Osiris was not only the dying pharaoh but, eventually, as we are told in the Coffin Texts and the *Book of Going Forth By Day*, any dying human. He was the basis for the Egyptian practice of mummification and afterlife belief in general. Furthermore, Osiris' life, death, and resurrection are metaphors for the central life-giving phenomenon in Egypt, the annual death and resurrection of the land flooded by the Nile. And as the resurrection god, who was usually depicted as a mummy, sometimes in an ithyphallic state, Osiris was, quite logically, a fertility god represented by the sprouting of crops after the flood. The fertility aspect was emphasized by the association of Osiris at Memphis with the Apis bull, an association that developed in the Ptolemaic and Roman periods into the cult of Serapis, a combination of Osiris and Apis. Osiris was said to have been born at Bursiris and to have died at Abydos, his principle cult center. The sister and wife of Osiris was the great goddess Isis, a figure who would play a significant role in Egyptian mythology and resurrection theology until well into Roman times.

Closely associated with Osiris is the jackal or dog-headed Anubis (Anpu) who, in his earliest form, devoured the dead. Later, as funerary practices developed, he became the embalmer—especially of

the dead Osiris—and the protector of graves. He was sometimes depicted lying on the chest containing the inner organs of the deceased. Anubis was the son of Osiris by Osiris' sister Nephtys. He served Osiris in the underworld as a judge of the dead, and he became a Hermes-like conductor of souls in the mystery cult of Isis in Roman times. (*See* Part II; Egyptian).

El

El was an ancient god of the Canaanites, who lived in the Land of Canaan, roughly, present day Israel, Palestine, and Lebanon. El was the husband of the goddess Asherah. He is roughly equivalent to the Mesopotamian Anu (*See* Mesopotamian). He was "El of the holy mountain Sapan (Tsafon)," the Ilib (Elib), or "father god," Like so many Near Eastern high gods, El was associated with the bull and was sometime seen as the creator. The Greeks equated El with Kronos, the father of Zeus, because in various early myth fragments from the city of Ugarit it is suggested that El earned the title "creator" and "Father of the Gods" by, like Zeus, defeating his parents, Heaven and Earth. Taken as a creator, El was head of the Canaanite pantheon, the source of virility without which life was not possible. One Ugaritic tablet tells how in ancient times, as El stood at the seashore, his hand (penis) grew as long as the sea itself. With him were two women, his wives, whom he kissed and impregnated simultaneously. They gave birth to Dawn and Dusk.

The Semitic term "El" essentially refers to the concept of god. As such it is related to the Arabic *il* and thus *ilah* and *al ilah*—literally "the god"—and Allah and the Hebrew *Elohim*. It seems almost certain that the God of the Jews evolved gradually from the Canaanite El, who was in all likelihood the "God of Abraham. El's name is contained in such words as EL-ohim, Isra-EL ("El rules"), and Ishma-EL. (*See* Part II; Canaanite, Hebrew).

Elder Brother

Sometimes, as in the Papago Indian myth, Elder Brother, the son of Sky and Earth, is a creator god. For the neighboring Piman and near by Zuni Indians of the American Southwest, Elder Brother is a Christ-like figure. In the Piman myth he is killed by his people and resurrected. In the Zuni myth, as in the Piman one, he is sent by his creator father to enlighten the people in the pre-emergence underworld and to bring them out of that world into this one. In some cases Elder Brother is literally the sun. (*See* Part II; Papago, Pima, Zuni).

Eliade, Mircea

One of the 20th century's leading scholars of religion and mythology, Mircea Eliade (1907–1986) was concerned in his work with the relationship between the sacred and the profane. The sacred is revealed in symbols, myths, and rituals—archetypal structures that carry us back to *illud tempus* ("that time" or "myth time")—the time of creation—and to the essence of who we are as cultures and as a species. In the sacred we find the source of our identity, the source of whatever significance we have. As such, sacred time is real and effective. Through the experience of symbols, myths, and ritu-

als, we are somehow protected against merely historical or profane time. Eliade provides examples: When the Vedic people of India erected a temple to the god Agni, an important figure in their creation myth, this amounted to "the reproduction—on the microcosmic scale—of the Creation," and when ancient peoples settled new land, they practiced rituals, usually involving their creation myths. In so doing they turned chaotic land into a newly created cosmos (Eliade, *Sacred*, 30–31; *See* Archetype, Eternal Return).

Elohim

Elohim is a Hebrew word (plural of *El* or *Eloah*) connoting divinity and is used as a name of the Hebrew God (Yahweh) in *Genesis* and elsewhere. Many scholars have suggested a connection between the Cannanite creator god El and the creator god of the Hebrew Bible. (*See* El, Part II; Cannanite, Hebrew).

Emergence

The emergence, especially in the creation mythology of many southwestern Native American tribes, is the process by which original people emerged birth-like from a dark pre-emergence world in what is, in effect, Mother Earth. The place of emergence is marked to this day in southwestern Native North American *kivas* (sacred—usually underground, rooms) by a little hole known as the *sipapu* in the middle of the floor (*See* Part I; Emergence Creation, Part II; Acoma).

Enki

Enki is the Sumerian name for the name Ea in the Semitic Akkadian-Babylonian languages. Lord (*en*) of the soil or earth (*ki*), whose home was the underground sweet waters (*abzu, apsu*), Enki was the source of irrigation, a practice important in his cult center home, the city of Eridu in the southern marshlands of what is present day Iraq. Enki was a trickster of sorts, famous for magical powers and incantations. Skillful at all crafts, he was said to be a son of An (*See* Anu) and the mother-riverbed goddess Nammu ("Lady Vulva"). He was considered third in rank among the deities after An and Enlil. Damgalnuna (Daminka), a version of the mother goddess, was his wife. Their son, Asarluhi, was later assimilated in Babylon into the most powerful Babylonian god, Marduk. Like most trickster gods, Enki possessed an insatiable sexual appetite, a fact that probably was a metaphorical expression of his role as a god of fertility and irrigation.

Enki possessed the *me,* the essential elements of culture, social order, and civilization. He was a creator, culture hero who placed fish in the rivers and who taught the people agriculture.

There is frequently comedy in the Enki myths as there is in most trickster-creator myths. This is the myth of Enki and Ninmah. To celebrate their new found freedom and the creation of humans, the Anunnaki, the first generation of deities, had a banquet at which Enki and the goddess Ninmah drank too much. Ninmah challenged Enki to a creative contest. She would make new humans with any defects she saw fit. Enki agreed but with the idea that he would attempt to choose roles for the misfits that would negate their defects. A man with an eye problem he made a singer. A man who constantly leaked semen he cured with a

magic water incantation. There were six such creations and cures. Then the combatants changed positions. Enki would create humans with defects for Ninmah to counteract. One of these was a being called an *umul* who was so helpless that it could neither talk, walk, nor feed himself. Taunted by Enki to solve the being's problems, Ninmah asked it questions that it could not answer, offered it food that it could not use its hands to hold, and finally gave up in disgust. Enki had won the contest. It seems likely that the *umal* was the first human infant.

Trickster-creator myths are also often off-color.

This is the story of Enki and Ninhursaga, a myth that gives expression to Enki's ancient metaphorical aspect as the power behind the irrigation complexities of the southern marshlands of Mesopotamia. Enki lived in and was clearly associated with the sweet underground waters (*abzu, apsu*).

It was said that Enki filled the ditches of his land with semen, that is water. The words are the same in Sumerian, so that, for instance, the semen of the father god An (*See* Anu), was life-giving rain. Although Enki was married to Damgalnuna ("true wife"), one of several mother goddesses, he expressed the trickster's unbridled sexuality by "directing his semen owed to Damgalnuna . . . into the womb of Ninhursag[a]." Enki goes on to impregnate his own daughter and generations of daughters after that, producing among others, the goddess Utu ("Vegetation") Enki wanted to pour his semen into Uttu as well, but, Ninhursaga advised Uttu to resist unless Enki agreed to bring her cucumbers, apples and grapes. This Enki agreed to and produced the new plants by stretching out into formerly infertile desert. Now Uttu accepted the semen of Enki. (*See* Part II; Sumerian).

Enlil

Enlil ("Lord of the Air," Ellil in Semitic Akkadian-Babylonian)had his Sumerian cult center at Nippur. The son of the father sky god An (Anu) and the earth goddess Ki, Enlil, with his brother Enki (see above), were in charge of Fate. Enlil succeeded his father as head of the gods. His major interest was the earth itself, whereas Enki's was more with the waters on and below the earth. From his mountain home, where he reigned as a storm god, Enlil sent the flood to destroy wayward humanity, but Enki prevented total destruction.

In a Sumerian myth from Nippur discovered in Old and Middle Babylonian and Neo-Assyrian tablets, an origin myth that bears similarities to various Enki stories of seduction, Enlil is attracted to his natural counterpart, the young and beautiful Ninlil ("Lady of the Air"). Her mother, realizing that Ninlil is pubescent, advises her to purify herself in the river but to avoid the canal (irrigation ditch) called Inunbirdu, where Enlil will be lurking, ready to seduce and impregnate her. Naturally, Ninlil goes directly to the canal. Enlil is, in fact, waiting there, and he begins to attempt the seduction. Ninlil at first resists but later Enlil finds her at a more hidden place and rapes her, engendering the moon god Nanna (Suen or Sin). Enlil leaves, but is followed by Ninlil, and in

various disguises he impregnates her with various gods The myth ends with a hymn to Enlil as sources of abundance and fertility.

Ennead, The

The Ennead ("the Nine") is the pantheon of the great theological center of Heliopolis in ancient Egypt. Out of the Sun god Atum or Atum-Re, came Shu and Tefnut ("Air" and "Moisture"). They, in turn, produced Geb and Nut ("Earth" and "Sky"), who in turn became the parents of four of the primary figures in a dominant Egyptian myth: Osiris, Isis, Seth, and Nephtys. (*See* Egyptian Mythology)

En Sof

In the Jewish mystical writings of the Kabbala, God (*See* God) is a mysterious entity called En (Ein) Sof. The flame of divinity emerged from this being at the beginning of time as the first word, the *Bereshit,* the first word of creation, the revelation of En Sof, called Wisdom, which can lead to Intelligence. Elements of this kabbalist tradition have close company in the thinking and mythology of Gnosticism (*See* Gnosticism, Part II; Gnostic)

Enuma elish

The *Enuma elish*, the Babylonian creation epic, was discovered on first millennium B.C.E. tablet texts found at Assur, Nineveh, Kish, and Uruk. The epic is a nationalistic celebration of the city state of Babylon and its city god Marduk (Bewl, or "Lord"). Traditionally, it was recited at New Year festivals in Babylon (and later in Assyria at Nineveh, where eponymous Assur replaced Marduk as the hero). The development of the narrative reflects and, in effect, justifies the rise of Marduk from his status as a minor Sumerian deity to primary power of the Babylonian pantheon during the reign of Nebuchadrezzar I in the twelfth century B.C.E.

The rise of Marduk (and Assur) marks a significant change in the mythology of Mesopotamia to a strong patriarchal perspective. (*See* Part II; Babylonian, Sumerian)

Erlik

In several Central Asian creation narratives, Erlik is a trickster (see below) who is the "First Man", an assistant to the creator, or, more often a devil figure who undermines the creator's work.

(*See* Part II; Central Asian, Part III; Devil in Creation, Trickster in Creation)

Eros

Eros is better known by the name of his Roman cognate Cupid, usually depicted as a baby who wields devastating love arrows. The original Greek Eros ("Desire") was said by Hesiod to have been born of Chaos at the beginning of creation. The more generally accepted story, however, is that he was the son of the goddess of love Aphrodite (Roman Venus) by her passionate and ultimately embarrassing adulterous affair with the war god Ares (Mars).

Eternal Return, The

In his outlining of the "Myth of the Eternal Return" religious scholar and historian Mircea Eliade (*See* Eliade, Mircea)

postulates that by way of their religious life, ancient humans were able to connect with sacred time—*illo tempore,* the time of myth—and in so doing were able to find relief from the "terror of history," that is, profane, linear time that, by definition, is tragic in that death is inherent to it. Modern humans, too, according to Eliade, can find such relief by turning to the archetypes or patterns of *illo tempore* in myth and ritual. For Eliade and others, the purpose of religious traditions—the retelling of sacred stories and the reenacting of sacred events—is precisely that participation in the myth of the eternal return, participation in cyclical, that is ever-repeating eternal time, rather than linear, inevitably ending, time. (*See* Archetype).

Etiology

A common interpretation of myth is the etiological interpretation. According to this approach, myths have an explanatory or etiological aspect, explaining such phenomena as death, the passage of the sun and the moon, and the origin of the universe and life itself. In this sense the Greek myth of the rape of Persephone by Hades, her subsequent confinement to Hades for part of every year, and her annual return for several months to her grieving mother Demeter, is an explanation of the changing seasons. Etiology also marks the suggestions by some that such myths as those of the flood were told primarily to reflect actual floods in history. Certainly there are myths that can be clearly labeled as consciously etiological, myths of the "how the leopard got its spots" variety that we find in many cultures. And, in the sense that all creation myths explain our beginnings, all such myths have an etiological aspect. (*See* Introduction).

Etsa

Etsa was the sun god of the Andean Jivaro people of South America. He was the son of the creator, Kumpara (*See* Kumpara) and the pursuer of Nantu, the Moon goddess. Together he and Nantu continued the creative process.

Eurynome

Eurynome was the name given by the ancient pre-Greek Pelasgians to the Great Goddess who emerged from the Void and separated the sea from the sky so that she could dance on the former. It was her dancing that created the North Wind and the serpent Ophion with whom she mated. When Eurynome became a dove she laid the cosmic egg of creation. (*See* Cosmic Egg, Part II; Greek).

Evening Star and Morning Star

In North American Pawnee mythology, the creator was assisted by Evening Star in the west and Morning Star in the east. To populate the earth, Evening Star took Morning Star as her husband. Some say that Evening Star, or West Star Woman, had to be overpowered by Morning Star, the Great Star, before creation could be accomplished.

Evolution

The theory of evolution is a well-researched and well-documented description and explanation of an ongoing creation in which organisms inherit traits by way of genes, traits resulting in changes that can make the organism more

likely to survive. This process is called natural selection and can, and often does, result in the development of completely new species. It was Charles Darwin, in his 1859 work *On the Origins of Species,* who developed and publicized the then-radical theory of evolution, a theory that to this day arouses the ire of people who prefer to believe in creation as described in religious scripture. (*See* Intelligent Design, Creationism).

Ex Nihilo

Ex Nihilo is the Latin for "from nothing" and is commonly used in discussions of creation myths to categorize a type of creation myth in which a lone deity creates from nothing, using only is/her own mind and will. (*See* Part I; Ex Nihilo Creation, Part II; Hebrew).

Fam (Sekume)

Fam was the first human-like creature created by the three part Fang creator in Africa. Fam was created in the god's image. He fell from grace, was exiled, and became a devil-like being. He was replaced by a new Fam—sometimes called Sekume—the Fang ancestor.

Faro and Pemba

In West Africa the Mande hero-creator Faro is a personification of the fertilizing Niger River. He floods to save his people from his evil twin brother Pemba, who represents the opposite of fertility.

Feathered Serpent

The Serpent (*coatl*) was a common representation of a Mesoamerican deity for nearly 2000 years, beginning with the Olmec civilization. The Teotihucuan people gave the Serpent god the feathers of the colorful *quetzal* bird so that he became, by definition, *Quetzalcoatl* to the Toltec, Zapotec, Mixtec, and Aztec people. The Mayans knew him as Kukulkan. (*See* Quetzalcoatl).

Fertile Crescent

The term "Fertile Crescent" is a term once commonly used for a part of the Middle East It is the fertile land forming an arch around Syria and including the eastern Mediterranean coast beginning with Egypt in the West, southeastern Anatolia (Asian Turkey) in the North and Mesopotamia between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers in present day Iraq in the East. The term is sometimes used synonymously—if loosely and inaccurately—with the terms "Middle East," "Near East," and "the Levant."

Fidi Mkullu

The creator of the Baluba and Basonge peoples of the Congo region of Africa, Fidi Mkullu's authority was challenged by a trickster-devil figure who in some stories was his son.

Fintan

See Cesair

Firbolg

The Firbolg (Fir Bholg) or "bag men" in Irish mythology probably represent a pre-Celtic people in Ireland. They are credited with dividing the island into five provinces or coiceds ("fifths") and with establishing a sacred kingship based on the relationship between the king's sovereignty and the land's fertility.

First Man and First Woman

First Man and First Woman are names applied to original human creations in many mythologies. In Navajo mythology, for instance, First Man and First Woman produced several sets of twins who played important roles in the emergence (*See* Part I; Emergence Creation) process through various worlds before the present one (*See* Part III; Twins in Creation).

First Mother

See Corn Mother

Five Suns

A creation story of the Toltec and other later Mesoamericans features five suns or successive worlds, the fifth being the Toltec-Aztec world, the first four worlds having been destroyed successively. There are many versions of this myth. Some say that the first age was ruled by the god Tezcatlipoca (*See* Tecciztecatl), who was defeated by Quetzalcoatl (*See* Quetzalcoatl) and the jaguars. The second age was destroyed by a hurricane, but Tezcatlipoca regained power. The third world was controlled by Tlaloc, but that world came to an end when Quetzalcoatl destroyed it with fire. The fourth sun belonged to Chalchiuhtlicue and was destroyed by a flood. The fifth world arose at Teotihuacan where Nanahuatzin (*See* Nanantzin) leapt into a fire and became the sun. It was said that this world, fed by blood sacrifices, would end in earthquakes (*See* Part II; Aztec, Toltec).

Flat Pipe

The culture hero-creator of the Native American Arapaho, Flat Pipe thought things into existence under the direction of the Great Spirit (*See* Part III; Thought-based Creation).

Flood

The Flood, or Deluge, sent by a deity to destroy wicked humanity, is an archetypal motif common to a stage of creation myths that follows the fall of humanity from grace and precedes a new creation—a second chance—following the destruction. The flood myth frequently features a surviving flood hero who represents the link between the old creation and the new. (*See* Noah, Part III; Flood in Creation)

Fomorians

In Irish mythology the Fomorians were one-armed, one-legged, violent demons from under or beyond the sea, who fought against early settlers of Ireland.

Four Ages of Man

The ancient Indian *Puranas* (*See* Puranas) teach that each eon, or *kalpa,* is composed of four ages, or *yugas*. These ages are named for four dice throws: the *Krta* or *Satya,* the *Treta*, the *Dvapara*, and the *Kali.* Each age ends and is followed by a new creation, a new age. (*See* Part II; Indian, Part III; Ages of Creation)

Four Directions

Many cultures stress the four directions—North, South. East, and West—in their creation myths and their mythologies in general. This is particularly true of Native Americans. Depending on the tribe in question, each direction has certain values or traits associated with it. The Four directions form a quaternity, a four-

sided square that encloses creation. In the case of the Navajos and others, particular colors are associated with the Four Directions. (*See* Axis Mundi, Part III; Four Directions in Creation)'

Four Grandfathers

In various Apache myths of North America, the Four Grandfathers are depicted as the first Native Americans—the first to emerge from under the earth into this world—as the four directions that hold up the universe, and as arrangers of order in the created world.

Von Franz, Marie Louise

A disciple of the Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung (*See* Jung, Carl), Marie Louise von Franz (1915–1998) was a major scholar of Jungian psychology and interests related to that psychology, including, for example, fairy tales and creation myths. Her study of the latter provides us with the most comprehensive archetypal/psychological approach to these myths. Where most scholars of creation myths approach the subject culturally and historically, Dr. von Franz suggests that the process from nothing, chaos to cosmos, the creation of the universe from world parents, the emergence of people from the darkness of the underworld, or the discovery of the makings of Earth at the bottom of the maternal waters can be seen as the psychological awakening from the unconscious world to the world of consciousness or self-knowledge. (*See* Introduction, Annotated Bibliography)

Freud, Sigmund

Sigmund Freud (1856–1939), the Austrian psychologist and developer of theories of psychoanalysis, had a strong interest in mythology. One Freudian theory, that of the "primal horde," based on a theory of Charles Darwin—can be applied to many creation myths. Darwin suggested that early humans, like other animals, once lived in clan groups or "primal hordes" led by strong males who alone had sexual access to the females of the group. Freud postulated periodical attempts on the part of the dominant male's sons to kill him, thus gaining power over the horde. The theme of the murder of the father by sons is evident in the Greek creation myth in which Ouranos and later Kronos are overpowered by their sons. The Hittite-Hurrian creation story, as well, contains elements that can serve as illustrations of Freud's theory (*See* Greek, Hittitte-Hurrian).

Fuxi

A legendary emperor of China, Fuxi is said to have invented fishing nets, music, fire, and the measurement of time.

Gaia

Gaia (Ge, Gaea, Roman Tellus) was the Greek goddess who first personified Earth. In the creation myth contained in the *Theogony* of Hesiod, she was the very first being to emerge from the Chaos that existed before creation. It was she who gave birth to the first elements of creation: the mountains, the sea, and the sky, personified by Ouranos, who covered all parts of her and so impregnated her with the next generation of deities, the Cyclopes, the hundred-handed giants and the Titans, led by Kronos and Rhea, the parents of the Olympians, led by Zeus. (*See* Part II; Greek).

Gborogboro and Meme

The creator of the African Lugbara people made the first two creatures on Earth. These were Gborogboro (Sky Person), who was male, and Meme (Big Body), who was female. Gborogboro and Meme were personifications of Heaven and Earth.

Geb and Nut

Geb, the Egyptian personification of Earth, and his consort Nut, the personification of Sky, were the children of Shu (Air) and Tefnut (Moisture). In most mythologies Earth is female and Sky male, but in this case the roles are reversed. According to the story the male god Geb (Earth) and the female Nut (Sky) at first lay together as one being but were separated by their father, Shu, who, as air, provided space between Earth and Sky where other beings could be created. In many paintings, Geb is shown, sometimes with an erect penis, lying on his back, as his sister-wife arches over him, held up by their her father Shu. Geb and Nut were the parents of Osiris and Seth and their sister-wives Isis and Nephtys, the principles, with the god Horus—the son of Isis and Osiris—of the Egyptian myth of the murder of Osiris, his dismemberment, and his revival by Isis. (*See* Part II; Egyptian).

Genesis

The first book of the Hebrew *Torah* and the Bible is the book of *Genesis* (>Latin *genesis* = birth), a book revered not only buy Jews but by Christians and Muslims. Genesis contains the Hebrew version of the cosmic birth story that is creation itself. Genesis also contains the myth of the Flood and many other stories.

Different parts of Genesis were composed at different times by different writers. (*See* Part II; Hebrew).

Gikuyu

Gikuyu was the ancestor of the Kikuyu people of Africa (*See* Kikuyu).

Gilgamesh

Gilgamesh is the title generally given to the oldest extant epic poem in the world and contains the Sumerian/Babylonian myth of creation and the flood. This ancient Mesopotamian poem was so named after its hero, the legendary Sumerian king, Gilgamesh. By about 2400 B.C.E. there were already myths and legends about this early king of Uruk (Urug). Eventually Gilgamesh would be worshipped at various Sumerian sites. It is even possible that an actual King Gilgamesh was deified during his lifetime (c.2650 B.C.E.); due to the building of the walls of Uruk and his defense of Uruk against the rival city of Kish, he would be known as king of the Underworld—a role that led in later years to a complex burial cult, inevitably bringing to mind the cult of the underworld lord Osiris in Egypt.

There are five written fragments of the Gilgamesh myth cycle dating from the Sumerian period, and they do not seem to have been combined in anything like the epic form of the tale that was composed later in Babylon. "Gilgamesh and Agga" or "The Man of Sumer" tells how King Gilgamesh of Uruk, besieged behind his walls by his enemy, Agga of Kish, used a distracting trick and was able to capture his enemy before generously pardoning

him. "Gilgamesh and the land of the Living," also known as "Gilgamesh and Huwawa" or "Gilgamesh and the Cedar Forest," exists in many forms and plays a role in the Babylonian epic as well. Hating the sight of death and wishing to achieve fame and immortality, Gilgamesh, with his follower Enkidu and with guidance from the sun god Utu, sets out to fight Huwawa (Humbaba), the gigantic and monstrous caretaker of the Cedar Forest sacred to the great god Enlil (see above). When they get there, Enkidu is fearful, but Gilgamesh braves the powerful rays with which the monster plagues them and cuts down trees so as to be able to capture him. After the capture, Huwawa pleads for his life, but the angry Enkidu decapitates him. For this ungenerous act the heroes are cursed by Enlil.

"Gilgamesh and the Bull of Heaven," which exists only in bits, probably tells how Gilgamesh disdainfully refused the advances of the beautiful goddess Inanna and how he killed the Bull of Heaven sent by the goddess to avenge the insult to her.

"Gilgamesh, Enkidu, and the Netherworld," or "Gilgamesh and the Huluppu-tree," does not follow logically from the Bull of Heaven story as it reveals a much different relationship between the hero and Inanna. It is from the beginning of or introduction to this myth that the Sumerian creation story can be derived. After the creation, Inanna takes a windswept Huluppu-tree from the river bank and plants it in her temple at Uruk. Her plan is to make furniture from it when it is full grown, but when that time comes, she finds that her plans are foiled by two inhabitants of the tree, the powerful and dangerous Anzu bird, the despondent maiden Lilit (Lilith), and a mean serpent. Even Inanna's brother, Utu, cannot help her dislodge the three demonic creatures, but Gilgamesh can. He successfully kills the serpent, scaring away the other demons, and the tree is cut down and used for Inanna's sacred furniture. Inanna uses part of the wood to make two mysterious objects called the *pukku* and the *mukku*, which somehow fall into the netherworld. When Enkidu offers to retrieve them, Gilgamesh cautions his friend and servant about the taboos of the underworld but allows him to go. Because Enkidu fails to follow the instructions, he is not able to return to the world above. Even Enlil and Enki (*See* Enki) are unable to help the hero retrieve his friend, but the shamanic Enki instructs Utu to burn a hole in the ground by way of which Enkidu's ghost emerges and tells Gilgamesh about existence in the underworld.

"The Death of Gilgamesh" is a mere fragment, in which Gilgamesh expresses resentment about his death. Scholars have suggested that it might really be the story of Enkidu's death.

The more fully developed epic of Gilgamesh certainly had oral roots, but was first expressed in written—Akkadian—form in the Old Babylonian period of the early second millennium B.C.E. A more complete version was written later, in the Middle Babylonian period, supposedly by one Sin-leqe-unnini, and there are Neo-Babylonian, Neo-Assyrian, Hittite and other versions. The epic had gained popularity in much of the Middle East by the middle of the second millennium B.C.E. It was apparently the Middle Babylonian version that was the basis

for most of the Ninevite recension, the c. 1500 line epic in 12 tablets discovered in the Assyrian Library of Assurbanipal at Nineveh dating from the seventh century B.C.E.

Unlike the Gilgamesh of the Sumerian fragments, the hero of the Babylonian Gilgamesh epic is distinctly human rather than divine. In fact, if there is an underlying theme to the whole epic it is Gilgamesh's discovery of his mortality in his passage from arrogance to humility in a quest for immortality. The epic emphasizes the difference between humans and deities in general, based in the fact that even a hero, a goddess's son, has to die.

The epic opens with what is essentially a hymn to the great King Gilgamesh of Uruk, builder of city walls, writer of his many experiences and journeys on tablets, son of Ninsun. This is a hymn of praise and even human arrogance that serves as the preface for the rites of passage from ignorance to knowledge that will follow. The seed of disillusionment, the existence of a significant flaw, makes itself evident even within the first tablet, when we learn that the king has tyrannized his people by demanding conjugal rights to brides. When the people complain to Anu (*See* An) he instructs Aruru, the mother goddess, to create a being who can balance Gilgamesh's power. The new creation is the hairy, bestial Enkidu, who eats grass and sets free animals trapped by huntsmen. When the existence of Enkidu is reported to Gilgamesh he follows the advice of the huntsmen and sends out the beautiful prostitute Samhat to tame him. It should be remembered that prostitutes were sacred to Ishtar (*See* Inanna). The tactic works. Enkidu and Samhat make love for six days and seven nights until Enkidu has been humanized, told about Gilgamesh, and deprived of some of his purely animal nature. The reader here can hardly avoid a fleeting vision of the story of Samson and Delilah in he Hebrew Bible.

Back in Uruk, Gilgamesh dreams of Enkidu and then, recurrently, of heavy objects that have come from the sky, objects to which he feels sexually attracted. Gilgamesh's mother, Ninsun, interprets the dreams for her son, explaining that they are about a man who will become his companion and closest friend. Many critics have suggested a homosexual aspect to the Gilgamesh-Enkidu relationship as indicated first by these dreams and then by later events.

In Tablet 2, the love of Gilgamesh and Enkidu is consummated, as it were, in a manly wrestling match that is barely won by the king. But Enkidu's courage and power impress him and the two become companions. The next three tablets concern the adventures of the two heroes in the Cedar Forest of Enlil, guarded by Humbaba (the Sumerian Hawawa). There, presumably, they kill the monster, as indicated in other versions of the story.

What follows, in Tablet 6, is the surprising story of Gilgamesh's refusal of Ishtar (Sumerian Inanna), based on the Sumerian story mentioned above. The heroes are back in Uruk, and the newly cleansed and adorned king is approached by Ishtar with a proposition of love and marriage and fertility for himself, his city, and its fields and animals. Gilgamesh rejects the offer outright, pointing to the tragic ends of so many of the goddess' former lovers.

Furious, Ishtar has Anu send the Bull of Heaven to attack the heroes, and, after the beast kills hundreds of people—perhaps representing a plague—the heroes succeed in killing him. Gilgamesh further insults his divine enemy by flinging a thigh of the beast at her.

Gilgamesh's rejection of Ishtar is difficult to understand, given the fact that she was the city goddess of Uruk and that the sacred marriage of King and Goddess had been a foundation of Mesopotamian culture at least since the Old Sumerian period. There is the possibility that the incident somehow reflects the demythologizing of divine kings as well as a movement away from the strong goddess aspect of religion and culture to the kind of patriarchy revealed also in the Babylonian creation epic, the *Enuma elish*. But this interpretation is somewhat undermined by the existence of the earlier Sumerian version of the story. It is possible that the reaction of Gilgamesh is simply demanded by his particular character or persona, one that prefers the company of Enkidu to that of Ishtar.

In Tablet 7, Enkidu dreams that Anu, Ea, and Shamash have decided that for the killing of Humbaba and the Bull of Heaven either he or Gilgamesh must pay with his life. Enkidu fades into sickness; in Tablet 8, he dies and is lamented by the heart-broken Gilgamesh.

Tablet 9 concerns Gilgamesh's fear of death and his danger-filled journey in what is, in effect, an archetypal underworld. He must convince the horrible scorpion people to let him pass through a long, dark tunnel. Also, there is a relationship with the beautiful ale wife Siduri in her jeweled garden. Siduri is to have sisters in the *Odyssey*'s Calypso and Circe and the *Aeneid*'s Dido, women who, through love, would prevent the patriarchal hero from completing his mission. Like Ishtar, Siduri is a comfortable alternative that must be overcome. Still, like Circe in the *Odyssey*, she finally helps the hero on his way with advice on how to proceed, and in Tablet 10, Gilgamesh is ferried across the waters of death by the ferryman Urshanabi. On the other side, he finds the ancient flood hero Utnapishtim (Ziusudra in an older Sumerian flood myth), who reminds his visitor that only the gods determine life and death.

Tablet 11 contains the flood myth that is remarkably similar to the one found in Genesis in the Bible. Gilgamesh asks Utnapishtim to explain how he has attained eternal life, and the old man answers by reciting the story of the flood.

Utnapishtim and his wife had lived in Suruppak. Ea had come to him there to announce that a flood was about to destroy humanity. He and his family would be spared only if they built a boat, for which the gods provided the measurements. The boat being constructed, Utnapishtim filled it with valuables, his own family, and representatives of all the species. Then came the most terrible of storms and a deluge that destroyed the earth. After seven days, the storm died down, and the ship landed on Mount Nisir. After another week, a dove was released to find land, but it returned unsuccessful to the ship. The same thing happened when a swallow was released. But when a released raven did not come back, Utnapishtim realized that he had been saved. He made offerings of thanks to the gods, and the mother goddess, in great distress,

promised always to remember him. After much discussion, Enlil granted Utnapishtim eternal life.

Gilgamesh, too, longs for eternal life, but Utnapishtim is skeptical of his ability to obtain it. As a test, he challenges the hero to stay awake for six days and seven nights. Gilgamesh, exhausted, immediately falls asleep and the flood hero's wife bakes a loaf of bread for each day he remains in that state. When Gilgamesh wakes up he sees the now moldy bread and realizes the point of Utnapistim's challenge. He is human, with human frailties. Eternal life is beyond his powers. Before he leaves, Utnapishtim, at the urging of his wife, tells Gilgamesh about a plant under the water that can at least preserve youth. On his way home with Urshanabi, the hero dives for the plant and retrieves it. But once again, being merely human, he falls asleep, and a serpent steals the plant. So it is that serpents slough off old skin and become new again.

Gilgamesh weeps in despair, but he and Urshanabi, abandoning the latter's boat, make their way to Uruk. There Gilgamesh proudly asks the ferryman to inspect his great wall and his fine city. In a sense, the hero accepts his humanity.

Tablet 12 is a late addition to the epic, present only in the Ninevite recension. It is a re-telling of the story of "Gilgamesh, Enkidu, and the Netherworld," in which the shade of Enkidu tells Gilgamesh about the underworld and the necessity of burying the dead. (*See* Part II; Babylonian, Sumerian).

Glooscap

The creator/trickster/culture hero Glooskap is a ubiquitous figure among the Algonquian peoples of Native North America. Many strange stories are told of him. Some say that he used the corpse of his mother as the material out of which to create humans and the stars and planets. Others say that he taught humans all they needed to know before he ascended into the clouds in his white canoe. Glooskap protected humans by killing the giants and monsters who threatened them. Like any good trickster he could steal, but he did so for the good of his people. Once he stole the beautiful maiden, Summer, so as to take her north to melt the giant of winter. Like many culture heroes, Glooskap had a twin who undermined his work, allowing evil into the world. Malsum was this twin's name. (*See* Nanabozho, Part II; Algonquin).

Gnosticism

The "Gnostics" were a mixture of people in the second and third centuries C.E., including Egyptians and Essene Jews, early Christians, who practiced mystery cults based on the idea of knowing the divine. *Gnosis* (*Gnosticism*) is a label for this loosely connected group. An important figure for Gnosis was Hermes Trimegistos, who was identified with the Egyptian god Thoth and is accredited with having said, "He who knows himself, knows the All." Many of the Christian followers of Gnosis were particularly devoted to what might seem to some to be the mysticism of John's Gospel (*See* Part II; Christian) and to his definition of "Eternal Life: to *know* you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent." (John 17:3). The Gnostic form of the *Logos* (the "Word") was sometimes the female figure of Divine Wisdom, Sophia (*See* Part II; Gnostic).

God

The word "god," refers to any deity, especially to male deities (as opposed to goddess for female deities). The English word comes from the Proto-German *gudan.* When capitalized in English as God it is used as a de facto name of the creator god of the Jews, Christians and Muslims and, some would say, for other monotheistic concepts of deity such as the Indian Brahman (*See* Brahman). God is Deus in Latin, El in Hebrew and Allah, all derived from the generic words for "god" but assuming, in the context of these religions, a single omnipotent deity. Still, "God" is, strictly speaking, less a proper name than, for instance, the Hebrew personal name for the creator, Yahweh. But that name itself is the result of a belief that the Hebrew god is too holy to be named. Thus, his name was expressed in the form of the tetragrammaton, YHVH, usually transliterated as Yahweh or Yahveh, based on the verb to be. This god reveals himself to Moses (see Moses below) as "I am". Since the name of God is unmentionable, because to speak the name might release its power and bring about destruction, he is addressed as Adonai ("My Lord(s)") or Elohim ("the god(s)"). The plural forms suggest that once he may have been, like the Moabite Chemosh or the Canaanite Baal and numerous other Middle Eastern gods of the third and second millennia, a tribal god among many gods. It is well known that the early Hebrews were attracted by the polytheism (*See* Polytheism) of the Canaanites and others. The attraction was strong enough that even the monarchy frequently succumbed to it. Monotheism, as opposed to monolatry (*See* Monolatry), among the Israelites was not common until the time of the exile in Babylon and the re-establishment of Israel after the exile, that is, not until the sixth century B.C.E. And even then it can be argued that the firm establishment monotheism in Judaism required the rabbinical or Talmudic process of the first century B.C.E. to the sixth century C.E. It seems almost certain that the god of the Jews evolved gradually from the Canaanite El (*See* El) who was in all likelihood the "God of Abraham." In Exodus 6, the deity introduces himself to Moses as Yahveh and points out that he had revealed himself to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as El Shaddai, and that they had not known that his name was Yahweh.

In any case, the god of the Hebrew Bible possessed many characteristics of the major Middle Eastern deities. A storm god, he could divide the sea and lead with a pillar of fire. As a god of war he could kill the enemies of the Israelites without mercy. He was a fertility god in that he could replenish the earth after the flood, and make even the barren Sara'i (Sarah), the wife of Abram (Abraham), bear a child. And he was a stern god of judgment who expelled Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden and punished his chosen people for their sins. He was the god who denied humans a common language—through which they might become too powerful—by destroying the Tower of Babel, the Babylonian ziggurat-temple. He was the angry god who answered the much-maligned Job "out of the tempest," asking him sarcastically, "Where were you when I laid the earth's foundations?"

For the early Christians (*See* Christianity) in Palestine, who were Jews, God was the god of the Hebrew Scriptures. But when that god is seen through the eyes of Jesus (*See* Jesus) and his followers who wrote the New Testament (the Christian books of the Bible), he was less of a war god and less of a storm god than the Hebrew version. Rather he had become the loving and approving father of Jesus. And it was Jesus as the "Son of God" who took up much of the role of the old Jewish god who had concerned himself directly and sometimes in person with the activities of humans. As such, Jesus took on aspects of the teaching culture hero (*See* Culture Hero).

In the Gospel of John Jesus is identified as the *Logos* (usually translated as the "Word"), or divine ordering principle, which had existed from the beginning of time and that was equated with God and became human ("became flesh"), as Jesus. Through Jesus and the spiritual presence of God as the Holy Spirit, the Christian god evolved in post New Testament times into a complex philosophical construct known as the Trinity, in which God has three aspects or "persons"—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (*See* Christianity).

In the third Abrahamic religion, Islam, God is Allah, a name derived from the Arabic for *the* god, al Lah (< al *il-lah*) (*See* Allah).

Unlike in most mythologies, the God of the Abrahamic (Jewish, Christian, and Islamic) traditions has no female companion or wife. This lack of a consort gives rise to many questions. Of course it is true that most liberal-minded theologians and other religious people would agree intellectually that God, as an immortal, is out of the procreative cycle and, therefore, genderless. But in the collective psyche, fed by scriptural and liturgical language, artistic depiction, traditional myths, and commonly attributed characteristics—especially of fatherhood—God—certainly in the Abrahamic tradition—is male; the female aspect at the level of deity has been essentially eliminated.

Yet the most obvious human metaphor for creation comes from the female act of giving birth, as, for instance, in the creation myths that use the emergence metaphor, in which the people enter the world from the earth-womb. It is logical enough, then, to wonder whether the God of Abraham ever had a consort. We know that Asherah, a form of the great goddess of Ugaritic Canaan, who was worshipped in sacred groves representing her fruitful life-creating loins, was popular among the Hebrews and that she was sometimes called the "Queen of Heaven," a position denied by the religious hierarchy who railed against Asherah worship.

It is evident that Christians, too, from early in the church's development gravitated towards a feminine counterbalance to the lofty male Trinity. They found one in the Virgin Mary who attained de facto goddess status, by way of her own immaculate conception and her being assumed into Heaven to reign there as "Queen."

It must be said, however, that although in polytheistic traditions the high creator gods typically have spouses and are sexual beings, the male-dominated view of godhead and of the origins of the universe is predominant in patriarchal societies in general. In the myths of many ancient religions there are struggles for power between agricultural-fertility mother

goddesses and warrior gods, struggles that reflected actual events and trends in the real world. In the Greek *Homeric Hymn to Earth* we hear that Gaia (*See* Gaia) or Earth, was the source of all things, "the Mother of us all." Hesiod supports that concept, claiming that the "wide-bosomed Earth" sprang from Chaos, but he notes that she was covered by her self-generated offspring Ouranos, resulting in the birth of Kronos (Sky and Time). Kronos hated his father for covering his mother, who complained to her son about the father's brutality, and he proceeded to separate his parents by inserting his sickle between them and castrating the father. He then went on to rape his sister Rhea—a deity who, like his mother, was a personification of Earth—and she gave birth to Zeus and the other Olympians—philandering, raping, frighteningly arbitrary males, whose sisters, wives, and daughters tended to be either masculinized huntresses and warriors like Artemis and Athena, nagging wives like Hera, or fawning vamps like Aphrodite. Even some important births the patriarch Zeus took care of himself; Athena was born of his head and Dionysos of his thigh. The mythology of Greece is second only to the Bible as a provider of metaphors for deity in the collective Western psyche.

It seems fair to say that the belief in male power and the right of the male, because of that physical power, to dominate society is at the center of much of the world's social being and its concept of the gods or God. It is reflected in monumental architecture, the celebration of conquest in its many forms, and, it could be argued, in a general acceptance of the human dominion over Nature and particular territory in God's name as well as to the separation of morality and religion from responsibilities for the environment, that is to say, for "Mother Earth." Male power is also reflected in the concept of judgment and retribution, in the importance our society attributes to hierarchy, as well as in the universally accepted idea, in both education and business, for instance, of proving oneself by advancing over others.

Furthermore, a religious-based belief in the cult of male reason and order as a natural adjunct of male power has resulted in the suppression of feminine values, of non-physical power, and of women in general. The myth of female disorder and lack of reasoning power has been prevalent at least since the second millennium B.C.E., in myths such as that of the Mesopotamian Marduk's defeat of the female primeval power, Tiamat (*See* Allah, Christianity, El, Elohim, God, Islam, Judaism, Yahweh, Part II; Babylonian, Hebrew).

Good Mind and Bad Mind

Good Mind and Bad Mind are the Tuscarora Indian versions of the twins who represent duality in creation. Good Mind created the sun and made humans, animals, and plants. Bad Mind, who hated his brother, made dangerous animals and natural objects that brought pain and death to the people. Good Mind defeated Bad Mind, who was sent down into the earth, from which place he still plagues humanity (*See* Part III; Duality in Creation, Twins in Creation)

Good Spirit and Bad Spirit

Good Spirit and Bad Spirit are Iroquoian (*See* Part II; Oneida) personifications

of the essential duality of creation (*See* Part III; Duality in Creation, Twins in Creation).

Great Man

The creator of the Miadu Indians of California is sometimes called Great Man.

Great Mother

The Great Mother or "Great Goddess" is a form of the Goddess who has many persona in world mythology. She is Mother Earth or the Earth Goddess, the personification of Earth itself. She is a fertility deity. She gives birth to living things, she nurtures them, and she takes them back into herself at death. According to some, she represents an old agricultural matrilineal and perhaps matriarchal society that was overcome by male dominated cultures dedicated to war and conquest. In creation mythology in her form as Earth she is typically separated from her consort, Sky so that creation can take place on her. Sometimes she is the sacrificial victim out of whose dismembered body creation is constituted. In some mythologies she is the creator or the first expression of creation. This is logical as the female body rather than the male is the birth giving body. (*See* Corn Mother, Earth Mother, Gaia).

Great Mystery

See Great Spirit

Great Spirit

The "Great Spirit" or the "Great Mystery" are names commonly applied to North American—especially Plains Indians—concepts of the creator god or spirit who oversees all existence. He is the highest of the spirits who underlie the animistic world. Sometimes the Great Spirit is a personification of the sun or the sky, but more often is an intangible source of life, more like the Hindu Brahman (*See* Brahman) than the Abrahamic God (*See* Abraham). On Earth he is often assisted by a trickster-culture hero or by goddesses such as the Southwestern Spider Woman (*See* Spider Woman). In short, since the Great Spirit tends to be withdrawn from Earth and earthly things, there are few Great Spirit myths as such. It is enough to say, as in the case of the Algonquian Wakan Tanka or the Sioux Wakan Tanka that the Great Spirit is, animistically, like Brahman, everywhere and in everything and neither male nor female. (*See* Part II; Anishinabe, Sioux).

Greek Mythology

The religion or mythology associated with the ancient Greeks has particularly influenced the cultures of the Western world. Greek mythology can be read as a single, gradually composed saga of the folk imagination and many talented authors, a saga in which characters and events from the beginning of conceived time are interrelated in a complex web that touches on every imaginable aspect of the human experience.

The early mythology of the land that would become Greece, the mythology of the so-called archaic and classical periods of the middle and late Iron Age, was preceded by several Bronze Age, or Helladic, stages. Linguistic evidence and the Greek historical tradition suggest that at the end of the third millennium B.C.E. Indo

Europeans (*See* Indo Europeans) intruded upon peoples whose languages and culture were primarily, if not exclusively, non-Indo-European. These indigenous peoples are often referred to as "Aegean", or, by those who argue for an earlier pre-Greek but Indo-European intrusion, as Pelasgian, after Pelasgus, the "first man" of the ancient Pelasgian creation story. Somewhat later arrivals in Greece are referred to as "Danaans", a name taken from the story of Danaus and his many daughters, who, according to one hypothesis, brought agriculture and the fertility mysteries of the goddess Demeter to Greece from the Middle East (see Graves, *Greek Myths* I, 200 ff). Fragments from Apollonius of Rhodes and others suggest that the mythology of these Aegean peoples was, in fact, dominated by a Mother Goddess who was the source of all existence. Evidence in caves near Delphi, for instance, indicates goddess worship there dating at least from 4000 B.C.E. By 1400 B.C.E., Gaia (*See* Gaia)—the personification of Earth—seems to have been the central focus of worship at Delphi. It was not until the eighth century B.C.E. that the Gaia cult was replaced by that of the male god Apollo.

Two cultural systems of the pre-Greek period, systems, also dominated by a goddess, are of particular interest. Burial sites dating from the Cycladic culture (the third millennium B.C.E.), named for the island group known as the Cyclades, contain a large number of nude female figurines, some with bird-like heads, many with stylized pubic triangles, all reminiscent of the fertility goddess figures of the pre-historic period in continental Europe and Asia Minor. Further archeological evidence in the form of frescoes suggests the influence of a goddess cult with origins in the Minoan culture—named for the legendary King Minos—of nearby Crete, by about 2000 B.C.E., a female figure, now decorated in the Mycenaean style, is, significantly, present.

The Mycenaeans, a group of warlike Indo Europeans whose language would evolve into a form of Greek and who invaded mainland Greece during the middle of the Bronze Age (c. 2000), brought with them the horse and chariot, advanced weapons, and the tradition of tumulus burial as well as mythological elements of the Indo European tradition. Sometimes called Achaeans by Homer, a name technically describing one of many groups of Hellenic peoples who migrated from Thessaly to the northern Peloponnesus, the Mycenaeans were the people of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra of Mycenae, Menelaus and Helen of Sparta, and, by association, Odysseus and Penelope of Ithaca. These are the familiar "Greek" as opposed to Trojan characters of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* by the poet or poets we call Homer, who would live many centuries later. By 1600 B.C.E., the Mycenaeans ruled the Greek mainland.

Meanwhile, on Crete, the Minoans were building their great palaces at Knossos and for several hundred years had possessed a form of writing we know as Linear A. We know that Greek speakers—undoubtedly the Mycenaeans—overpowered the Cretans in about 1450 B.C.E. and that they created typically Mycenaean citadels there soon afterwards. By 1300 B.C.E. they had applied their own language rather awkwardly to the Linear A system and created so-called

Linear B, a Greek language script useful for such things as inventories and other lists but not appropriate for literary purposes. Among the Linear B tablets, deciphered in 1953 by John Chadwick and Michael Ventris, are lists of offerings to gods. These lists indicate a radical shift away from a goddess-based mythology and religion to one presided over by the god Zeus.

In Linear B, then, we discover a pre-Homeric and pre-classical Mycenaean-Minoan version of what we think of as Greek mythology, the product of the indigenous peoples of Greece, the Minoans, the Indo-European tradition of the Mycenaeans, and the always present influence of the Middle East. Much later this mythology would, of course, be pruned and adapted to various conditions and needs by Homer, the writers of the *Homeric Hymns*, Hesiod, Pindar, and many others, including the dramatists of fifth century Athens. Although knowledge of the nature and deeds of these early Olympians of Linear B is sketchy, a definable and familiar pantheon does emerge.

Offerings listed on Linear B tablets for the various deities indicate the hierarchy. Zeus (Diwe) reigns supreme. Hera (Era) is present as are Poseidon (Posedaone), Athena (Atana Potinija), Apollo (Pajawone), Artemis (Atemito), Hermes (Emaa), Ares (Are or Enuwarijo), Hephaistos (Apaitioji), Dionysos (Diwonusojo), and perhaps a form of Demeter whose name Da-mater means "earth mother" and who with her daughter Persephone, might be associated with the inscription Potniai ("Ladies"), the descendants of the earlier Great Mother of Crete ("Lady of the Labyrinth") and the Neolithic tradition. The missing figure here is Aphrodite, probably a post-Mycenaean, arrival in Greece from Phoenicia via Cyprus, a version of many Semitic goddesses, themselves looking back to the ancient Sumerian goddess of love and fertility, Inanna (Ishtar).

Mycenaean society was characterized by a peasantry pursuing herding and relatively primitive agriculture, a society ruled over by a warrior aristocracy for whom raiding and conquest were appropriate paths to hero status. Monumental citadel architecture such as that at Mycenae itself with its impressive Lion Gate and beehive tombs, and the celebration of heroic deeds in story were logical expressions of such a society. Such a feudal warrior society formed a perfect basis for works such as the Homeric epics, which were based on stories of the Mycenaean culture before its collapse, passed down by legend and myth and other word-of-mouth means over several centuries.

The Mycenaean collapse was due to many causes, including the intrusion of a new wave of warrior-pastoralists from southwestern Macedonia called the Dorians in the 12th century B.C.E. One of the Dorian tribes was said to have descended from the hero Herakles, and Dorian methods reflected that hero's crude power. Following the Dorian invasion there was a long dark age characterized by a dying out of writing and the other arts, and small isolated colonized, often enslaved, communities eking a living from the soil.

Homer's *Odyssey,* dominated by the sad wanderings of the old soldier Od-

ysseus, gives some voice to the post-war disillusionment that might well have followed the Mycenaean demise, one perhaps ironically mirrored in the earlier, 13th century B.C.E. fall of Troy that is the subject of the *Iliad* and other tales. But in some ways the epic also reflects the new age of migration and advancement that began in the mid 9th century B.C.E., a period of several developments that marked a Greek awakening from the Dark Age. A Greek alphabetic writing was established along with structural changes in the language that made it more precise and more flexible, more suited to great poetry. A revival of interest in the past took place. The migrations over the centuries of people from the lands conquered by the Dorians, especially to Athens, the city that would become the cultural center of Greece, and from there to Ionia in Asia Minor, revived a seafaring and colonizing spirit. This was the period of the legendary Homer, when the great epics took something resembling their present form and Greek mythology as we know it began to come into full literary flower. Something of both post-war disillusionment and the cultural revival are, in fact, contained in the opening lines of the *Odyssey.*

> Let me tell the tale through you, Muse,
> The story of that man of all skills,
> Forced to wander to the ends of the earth
> Haunted by the glory days of holy Troy.

Both Homeric epics would serve the later Greeks as vehicles for the celebration of a hero cult in which figures of a mythical past, who mingled with and were often sired by the gods, were bigger, braver, and more beautiful than ordinary humans. These characters, whom the 7th century B.C.E. poet and myth-maker Hesiod called "the divine race of heroes" became associated with particular places and societies in Asia Minor and Greece, their tombs—often on ancient Mycenaean sites—serving as unifying sacred centers.

Whether two Homers (*See* Homer), a whole guild of Homeric bards, or one Homer composed the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, these works, with the 7th and 6th century B.C.E. *Homeric Hymns* by the Homeridae ("Sons of Homer"), and the works of Hesiod—especially his creation story in the *Theogony*—are the sourcebooks for much of what we know of Greek mythology of the pre-classical archaic period. In fact, Greeks of the later classical period used these works, almost as history sources, in schools, and the body of Greek mythology continued to grow and become more elaborate, especially in the fifth century B.C.E. hands of the great Athenian dramatists, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, and the poet Pindar. When we speak of Greek mythology we generally refer to the accumulated body of material that would have been known, for instance, to Aristotle and Alexander the Great at the beginning of the so-called Hellenistic Age in the 4th century B.C.E., with some augmentation from the later works of such literary figures as Apollonius of Rhodes and Apollodoros, whose works owe much to the stories told by the early fifth century B.C.E. writer Pherecydes of Leros.

It should be noted, however, that until the Hellenistic period when Apollodorus, Hyginus, Diodorus Siculus, and others collected myths more as an intellectual than a religious exercise, there was no single compilation of Greek mythology that could be compared, for instance, to the Bible or the *Vedas* and other collections of India. The myths were not necessarily doctrinal in any sense. They were part of a common spiritual heritage, taught in childhood by the women of the household and later interpreted and questioned by teacher-philosophers such as Socrates, Plato and Aristotle and by the writers and dramatists such as the ones mentioned above. If there was any sense of a canonical source, it would have been centered on the ancient works of Homer, the Homeridae, and Hesiod. More important is the fact that out of this canon, which itself reached back through earlier sources both to the ancient Indo-European myth-patterns and to some extent to the pre-Indo-European mythologies of the eastern and western Mediterranean, emerged a rich and complex, mythological tradition that reflected a uniquely Greek view of humanity and of the relation of humanity to the inexplicable forces of the universe. At the center of this tradition is the pantheon known as the 12 Olympians (see below), the family of gods and goddesses that dominates the classical Greek religion, a religion that to a great extent transcended differences between local practices and traditions (*See* Part II; Greek).

Gukumatz

In Mayan mythology Gukumatz, the Feathered Serpent (also known as Kukulkan, the Mayan version of Quetzalcoatl) was one of the creators, with the god Tepeu.

Gylfi

In Norse mythology, we are told that King Gylfi ruled what is now Sweden, and that he learned about the Norse gods from a wise old woman. He then disguised himself as an old man, called himself Gangleri, and went to Valhalla, where he questioned the High God, who answered his various questions about the world and its origins.

Hactcin

Some Apache North American Native people tell how before the world was created there were only spirit beings called the Hactcin who embodied natural powers. They were led by a leader known as Black Hactcin and lived in the Underworld. Black Hactcin created animals and people and led the people in their emergence (*See* Emergence) into our present world. (*See* Kachina, Yeii, Part II; Apache)

Hainuwele

The sacred maiden, Hainuwele, miraculously conceived and born, is the sacrificial victim—the figure whose ritual death will lead eventually to societal advancement—in the animistic origin myth of the Wemale people of Ceram in Indonesia. The myth's archetypal relatives are myths such as those of Corn Mother in Native North America. (*See* Corn Mother, Part II; Ceram).

Hatchawa

A boy culture hero of the Yaruro of Venezuela, Hatchawa was the grandson of the creator, Kuma (*See* Kuma). When Hatchawa saw the people at the bottom

of a hole and wished to bring them to the top his uncle Puana made him a rope and a hook to use for that purpose. Later he used a trick to steal fire for the people.

Hathor

Hathor was a Mother Goddess of ancient Egypt. She generally took the form of a cow.

Havaiki

For the Tuamotuan people of French Polynesia, Havaiki is the non-land or nothing-ness that existed before creation.

Heaven

A term used in many religious and mythic traditions to refer to the sky—the heavens—or more specifically to the living place of the gods, Heaven can also be seen as a paradise to which one goes after death. Heaven or something like it, exists in many traditions. There is the philosophical rather than physical Pure Land Buddhism, *svarga*, the Hindu heaven for the worthy. And in Judaism and Christianity, Heaven is where Yahweh/God lives. For Christians it is the dwelling place of Jesus, after his resurrection. The Virgin Mary is bodily assumed into Heaven after her death. In Christianity, Heaven is more particularly associated with the afterlife than it is in Judaism. In some Christian traditions, Heaven is where bodiless souls in a state of grace go after their sins are purged—sometimes in a place or state called Purgatory. After a general resurrection, these souls will, like the Virgin Mary, regain their bodily forms. Heaven is opposed to the concept of Hell in the three Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Christianity, Islam). In Islam, Heaven is *Jannat al-na'im* ("Gardens of Delight"), the joys of which are described in the Qur'an. At one point in his life, Muhammad visits the "Seven Heavens."

Hell

Hell is a place of punishment after death for many mythological traditions. In Norse mythology, Hel is the name of the land of the dead and the name of the terrible goddess who rules over it. In Hebrew, Hell is *Sheol* (*Gehenna*). In Christianity, Hell is traditionally seen as a fiery place, where Satan (*See* Satan) and his fellow fallen angels, who traditionally rebelled against God in a War in Heaven, were exiled. In Islam, Hell is *Jahannam,* a place spoken of in the Qur'an. *Jahannam* has several levels and seven gates, with punishments allotted according to the severity of sins committed during life. The Hell or *Inferno* of the Christian poet Dante in his *Divine Comedy* more closely resembles the Muslim Hell in its details and in its correlation between particular sins and punishments than it does the more traditional Hell of Christians. Dante's vision, however, was probably more influenced by classical views of the underworld, especially those of the Roman poet Virgil in the sixth book of his *Aeneid*, when the hero Aeneas witnesses sufferings of the sinful dead on his way to visit his father. Like many heroes, Jesus was said to have descended to the underworld (Hell) after his death to harrow it and thus to release worthy pre-Christian humans, the victims with Adam and Eve of the Original Sin.

Helper to All Maker

The Penobscot people of eastern North America tell how in the beginning the

creator, the All-Maker, created a helper from a wave in the primeval waters. This was Helper-to-All-Maker, who helped create the world—the plants, the animals, the mountains, the rivers, the forests

Hera

One of the 12 Olympians of Greek mythology, Hera was the sister and wife of the head god, Zeus (*See* Greek Mythology).

Hermes

In Greek mythology, Hermes was the offspring of the high god, Zeus, and Maia, whose father was Atlas, the Titan god who was forced by Zeus to hold up the world. Hermes was said to have invented the lyre, the alphabet, numbers, and astronomy. He was Zeus's messenger and was able to penetrate Hades, the Greek Underworld. Sometimes he acted as a trickster (*See* Trickster). As a baby he stole the prize cattle of the god Apollo. In Rome, a version of Hermes was called Mercury (*See* Gnosticism, Greek Mythology).

Hermes Trismegistus

An important figure for Gnosis was Hermes Trismegistus (Trimegistos). Identified with the Greek god Hermes by the Greek historian Herodotus, he was a form of the Egyptian god Thoth, to whom is accredited the crucial saying, "He who knows himself, knows the All."

Hesiod

Hesiod (c. 700 B.C.E.) is our primary source for the creation mythology of ancient Greece. He lived a century later than the legendary epic poet Homer (*See* Homer), the other primary source for Greek mythology. Hesiod's great work, the *Theogony*, tells of the origins of the gods and the world. (*See* Part II; Greek).

Hina

In Tahitian mythology Hina was the first woman. Unlike the first male, Ti'I (*See* Ti'I), she was good, promising to overcome the death brought about by Ti'i.

Hinduism

Hinduism is the primary religious system of India and the Indonesian island of Bali. Derived from the term meaning *flowing* of a river, Hinduism is more a flow of spiritual ideas than it is a religion in the usual sense of the word. Unlike Buddhism, Jainism, or Sikhism, all of which are tributaries of Hinduism, Hinduism has no particular founder.

Hinduism is characterized by an ability and willingness to absorb a huge number of gods and goddesses in an apparent polytheism. In practice, however, many Hindus tend to concentrate their worship on one of three particular deities, Shiva, Vishnu, or Devi (the "Goddess") or on lesser deities such as the always popular Ganesha. And in a mysterious way, with its all-encompassing absolute, Brahman (*See* Brahman), of which all gods and goddesses are but a reflection, Hinduism for some can be said to be ultimately monist or even monotheistic.

The earliest source of Hinduism was the religion and mythology of the people of the Neolithic Indus Valley, that was in full bloom before the invasion of Aryan (*See* Aryans) peoples from the north in the second millennium B.C.E. Archeological evidence suggests that the Indus Valley culture (or Dravidian culture,

after the language probably spoken by the people there, or Harappan after one of the two major cities in the area) was a goddess-dominated religion. That supposition if true is reflected in later Hinduism's emphasis on the various forms of Devi. Other Dravidian traditions seem to have been composite human-animal male deities, purification rites in pools, and a system of ritual sacrifice.

The Aryans (*See* Aryans), who arrived beginning in about 1500 B.C.E., brought with them an Indo European religion and pantheon that in many ways resembles the patriarchal systems of other Indo Europeans such as the Greeks and the Iranians. They also brought the beginnings of what would become the characteristic Hindu caste system, a system that would be dominated by the two upper classes—the priestly *brahmans* (*See* Brahmans) and the warrior *ksatriyas*. Pre-classical Hinduism or Vedism is expressed most fully in the sacred collections of wisdom and stories called *Vedas*. According to tradition, the *Vedas* were first transmitted orally and then transcribed by the sage Vyasa, who was also said to have written down the great Hindu epic the *Mahabharata*. The *Vedas* developed over many centuries and are made up of several kinds of texts. Most important are the four *Samhitas*("Collections")—the three liturgical *Vedas,* including the ancient *Rig Veda* ("Chant *Veda*"), the *Sama Veda*, and the Yajur Veda, and the *Athara Veda* ("Atharavan's *Veda*"). Offshoots of the Vedic texts were developed by schools of Vedic priests. These texts are called *Brahmanas, Aranyakas,* and *Upanisads*. The *Brahmanas*, the most important of which is the *Satapatha Brahmana*, are expositions of the absolute Brahman by priests (*brahmans)*, and are concerned with the proper practice of rituals. In the *Brahmanas,* the *Rig Veda*'s one time only world forming sacrifice of the transcendent primal male, Purusha, is essentially replaced by the cyclical death and resurrection sacrifice of Prajapati, himself the source of the creator god Brahma, in a sense, a male personification of Brahman. The original Purusha would evolve into the person of the god Vishnu.

The *Aranyakas* ("books of the forest") are more mystical texts, centering on the inner life and the universal Brahman. They precede the *Upanisads* ("mystical understandings"), which move away from Brahmanic teachings about proper ritual to a belief that the individual must seek *moksa,* release from the life death continuum or *samsara*. To achieve *moksa* the disciple must learn—perhaps from a *guru*—the connection between the transcendent absolute, *Brahman,* and the inner absolute, *Atman*. It is important to understand that the concept of life and the universe as developed in Vedic philosophy is the essence of Hinduism.

During the eight or nine hundred years after the late Vedic *Upanisads*—that is, from about 500 B.C.E., the great epics the *Mahabharata*, including especially its *Bhagavadgita* section of about 200 B.C.E., and the *Ramayana* play important roles in the development of a Hinduism dominated by the concepts of *bhakti*, or "devotion," and *dharma*, or "duty." Much mythical material of this classical Hinduism is also contained in works called *Puranas*, or "ancient stories," written between 400 and 1200 C.E. The epics and the *Puranas* come under the category

of *smrti*, "that which is remembered," rather than the more sacred Vedic scripture or *sruti*. If the epics and *Puranas* take what might be called mythological liberties, they are, nevertheless, firmly based in Vedic tradition and philosophy. The epics and the *Puranas* are, like the *Upanisads*, concerned with paths to salvation, or *moksa*. They are also primary sources for Hindu mythology, which is so important for everyday "popular" Hinduism.

Hindu mythology is a network of intermingling connecting threads that, if it could be perfectly understood, would provide a clear narrative map to the rich tapestry that is Hindu thought. As in the case of the medieval cathedral, the decorations of the given Hindu temple confront the viewer as a mysterious mythic story in which everything has philosophical or religious significance. The postures of the figures depicted, the objects held by them, the way they relate to each other all have specific meanings. So it is with Hindu mythology as passed down orally and as written in the epics and religious texts. No story is told for its own sake; every myth has meaning in relation to other myths and to the Vedic tradition that is its ultimate source. This overall source is dominated by the idea of cosmic sacrifice and related human rituals, by a universe and individuals that are repeatedly sacrificed so that they might be re-born.

As Hinduism developed over the centuries from the period of the Aryan invasions, so did its mythology—the narrative expression of its religious and philosophical understandings of the universe. The myths are found in many Sanskrit sources—especially the ancient *Rig Veda*, the other *Vedas*, the *Brahmanas*, the *Upanisads*, the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana,* and in the *Puranas* of the Common Era.

In the *Rig Veda* we find a pantheon made up of the sovereigns Varuna and Mitra and the warrior Indra as well as the two ritual deities Agni, or "Fire", and Soma, "the plant of immortality." Indra takes on a position of particular importance as upholder of cosmic order by defeating the demonic *asura* Vrtra. Two sun gods are Surya and Savitr. Usas is goddess of the dawn. Yama is god of the dead, and Vayu god of the wind. Rudra is an outsider of sorts but will develop later into the powerful god Shiva. Vishnu and Devi are present in Vedic scripture but have not yet achieved their greatest power.

A dominant creation myth of the *Rig Veda* is the animistic one of the sacrificial dismemberment of the primal man or Purusha. It is a myth that conveys the centrality of the ritual sacrifice in Hinduism. Purusha is the sacrifice out of which all things come, including the caste system. His mouth became the *brahmans*, those who teach with words; his arms become the *ksatriyas*, the warrior caste; his thighs became the ordinary populace, and his feet the servant classes. Indra and Agni were born of his mouth, Vayu of his breath.

In the *Brahmanas,* it is Prajapati who is the creator, sometimes by way of cosmic incest with his daughter, sometimes by way of masturbation, a method also employed in some Egyptian creation myths. By the time we get to the *Mahabharata*,

it is Brahma who takes the place of Prajapati as creator. The presence of Agni—fire—is important in these early creation stories. Agni eats even as the creator creates and his is the appropriate element to consume the dead human, who can then be reborn, as fire eats only the body and not the soul. In the *Puranas,* Brahma creates good and evil. Eventually Brahma will lose stature in favor of the great yogi Shiva; and Vishnu and his avatars, particularly Rama and the Lord Krishna, and the Goddess (Devi), who is at once Parvati, the wife of Shiva, Kali, the devourer, the violent Durga, and various other forms, or. (*See* Part II; Indian).

Homer

Homer is the name traditionally given to the composer(s) of the two great archaic Greek epics, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey,* probably composed orally in various stages between 900 and 700 B.C.E.. Scholars have long argued as to whether a single poet named Homer ever existed. The fact that so many places claim him as a son—Chios, Athens, Ionian Asia Minor, to mention only a few—makes him somehow the property of all Greece. It is likely that the work of Homer—especially the epic of wandering, the *Odyssey*—was, at least in part, a product of the Ionian migrations, with even eastern influence, indicated by the sometimes sympathetic treatment of the Trojans in the *Iliad.* Was he rather a series of poets, perhaps a guild of sorts, like the Homeridae who are credited with having written the series of mythological poems known as the *Homer Hymns*? Whether Homer existed or not, the epics in question have been a primary source for Greek mythology. Homer has long been, in fact, a part of Greek mythology himself, a mysterious blind bard. (*See* Greek Mythology, Part II; Greek).

Horus

In ancient Egyptian mythology, Horus was the falcon-headed son of Isis and the dead Osiris. Horus later struggled with the evil Seth to restore the kingdom of his father. The conflict between Horus and Seth is metaphorically related not only to the establishment of the early dynasties in Egypt and the struggle between north and south, but to sacred kingship in Egypt. The old king died as Osiris, the new king reigned as Horus, who had defeated the disorder of Seth. Horus was recognized as one of the greatest gods; his eyes were the sun and moon.

Huangdi

Huangdi (Guandi) is the Yellow Emperor of Chinese mythology. He is said to have fought against the monstrous Chiyou. Huangdi is also the title for Chinese emperors in general, and Huangdi was a popular Chinese god, as well, associated with War and with Justice.

Huitzilpochtli

The "Hummingbird of the South." Huitzilpochtli was a Mexica (Aztec) god who achieved dominant importance as a solar and war deity and as the patron and city god of the Aztec capital at Tenochtitlan. It was he who, acting as a culture hero, led the Aztecs to Tenochtitlan, where Mexico City sits today. Human sacrifices were made to

him. Huitzilpochtli has characteristics that identify him with hero myths. Like many heroes or man-gods, he was miraculously conceived. This happened when his mother, the goddess Coatlicue, was impregnated by a feather on a hill sacred to the serpent god. Coatlicue's pregnancy infuriated her already existing children, and in a rage they cut off her head and hands. She died but gave birth to the fully adult Huitzilopochtli who took revenge against his older siblings. (*See* Part II; Aztec).

Hung Vuong

Hung Vuong was a culture hero in Vietnamese mythology. He taught the original Vietnamese, the newly created Van-lang tribe, how to live in a proper manner.

Huruing Wuhhti

In some Hopi Indian myths the original creator was most Hard Beings Woman, Huruing Wuhti, who at the beginning was the only hard surface—the nucleus of the world to come.

Hwan-in and Hwan-ung

According to Korean mythology, in the beginning there was Hwan-ung, the son of the high god, Hwan-in. Hwan-ung wanted to live in the earth below, so his father sent him to Mount T'aebaeksan, between Manchuria and Korea with 3000 helpers. Hwan-ung acted as a culture hero, teaching the original Koreans how to live.

Iatiku and Nautsiti

These are the creative culture hero assistants of the goddess Thinking Woman (*See* Thinking Woman) in the creation myth of the Acoma people of the American Southwest. Iatiku means "Life Bringer" and Nautsiti means "Full Basket." These sisters are the seed bearers, the bringers of life sustaining elements to the people in the early days of creation. They are similar to the sister-creators of the Laguna myth.

Iktome

A popular trickster figure, especially among the Plains Indians of Native North America, Iktome (Iktonmi), the Spider, like most tricksters, was amoral; his appetites, especially his sexual appetite, were, like his friend Coyote's (*See* Coyote) insatiable. (*See* Part III; Trickster in Creation).

Ilmatar

The daughter of the Sky in the Finnish mythology of the epic *Kalevala,* Ilmatar was the Mother of the Waters, who floated in the primeval sea forming a place for the laying of the eggs that would result in creation.

Imberombera

Imberombera is the Great Mother of the Kakadu people of Australia. She is the primary force in the creative Dreaming process (*See* Dreaming, The).

Inca, the

The Inca, Manco Capac, was the son of Pachacamac, the Incan Sun and creator. His sister was his queen. All Inca rulers descended from this first pair of ancestors. The Inca and his wife traveled preaching the rule of Pachacamac. The

Inca and his followers founded Northern Cuzco (Hanan-Cuzco), and the queen and her converts founded Southern Cuzco (Hurin-Cuzco).

India Rosa

Among the Yaruro people of Venezuela, India Rosa is a name for the creator goddess Kuma. She is the wife or sister of the sun. As a culture hero she taught the women to make pottery and weave basketry.

Indo European

Indo European is a term used to identify a people who invaded Europe in the late fourth millennium or early third millennium B.C.E., and made their way gradually into, India and Iran to the east and eventually to Crete—so that by the end of the second millennium, all of Europe, much of Anatolia, Iran, and much of India were dominated by people most of whom we now refer to collectively as Indo Europeans, or, in some cases, Aryans (*See* Aryans). These peoples are the direct mythic and linguistic ancestors of much of the modern world, including Europe, with the exception of the Turks, the Basques, and peoples whose languages stem from the Finno-Ugric (Uralic) family—that is, the Finns, Hungarians, and Estonians. Not only the Indic and Iranian languages, but the Greek, Italic, Celtic, Germanic, Baltic, and Slavic groups are all offshoots of a Proto-Indo-European language.

The assumption of a Proto-Indo European culture and language out of which the Indo European invaders sprang is based primarily on linguistic, mythological, ritualistic, and archeological correspondences. An obvious common concept and language pattern, for instance, is deity: thus, *deus* in Latin, *dios* in Greek, *devha* in Sanskrit, and *daeva* in Persian.

There are many theories about the Proto-Indo-Europeans. The archeology of burial sites and the evidence of language and myth in later Indo-European cultures suggests that these Proto-Indo Europeans were patriarchal and patrilineal, warlike, semi-nomadic pastoralists who practiced cattle herding, some small scale agriculture and animal husbandry and who at least by the sixth millennium B.C.E. had domesticated the horse and trained it to pull wheeled vehicles such as chariots and possessed sophisticated weaponry, including the bow and arrow and metal knives and spears. Given the weaponry, the horse and chariot, and the herds, which were apparently the primary measure of wealth, it is not surprising that the military raid involving the stealing of cattle was an important activity for these peoples.

Wherever the Indo Europeans originated, it is clear that they brought certain mythological themes with them when they migrated south. These themes would take specific form in the mythological traditions we associate now with societies as widely diverse as those, for instance, of India, Greece, Iceland, and Ireland, with religious systems as various as Hinduism and Christianity. Such themes as sacred twins, the presence of triads or trinities and the ubiquitous presence of sacrifice as a basis of creation are examples of such themes.

A central Indo European hero theme with probable antecedents in Proto-Indo European society is that of the hero's struggle with and defeat of the serpent.

Whereas the serpent for Neolithic peoples seems to have been associated with fertility, the goddess, and deep earth knowledge, for the Indo Europeans it is clearly a representation of the kind of blind, terrestrial, animal-power that must be defeated by the enlightened sky god and/or his warrior-hero representative. The ancient Indian *Bhagavata Purana,* for instance, contains a myth of Krishna, the incarnation of the great god Vishnu, and his struggle with the serpent-monster Kaliya, a struggle that will be repeated in many forms by the saints and dragons, the heroes and serpents of later Indo European cultures. Krishna's underwater struggle especially resembles the much later one of the Anglo-Saxon Beowulf and the mother of the monster Grendel.

There is much argument among scholars as to the nature of and/or existence of a Proto-Indo European culture. What can be said for certain is that there were several stages of conquest and migration from the north into the established cultures of the Bronze Age in Europe, Anatolia, Iran, and India, that the conquerors and migrants brought a body of myths with them, that these myths reflected the patriarchal, hierarchical, and warlike social and political structures of the conquerors, and that the new gods, goddesses, and heroes undermined but did not completely eliminate the ones they found in the lands they invaded. Thus, in the mythologies that emerged from the various cultures that evolved over the centuries in the areas originally conquered by the northern invaders, we find a dominance of the Proto-Indo European type themes outlined above with a lingering strain of the primary themes of the old mythology of the sedentary agriculturalists. (*See* Aryans, Part III; Sacrifice in Creation, Twins in Creation).

Indo Iranian

The term "Indo Iranian" is used particularly by linguists and scholars of the Indo European (*See* Indo European) question to refer to the closeness in language and mythology of the so-called Aryan (*See* Aryans) peoples who invaded India and Iran perhaps from a common culture and setting. (*See* Indo European).

Intelligent Design

Intelligent design is a theory developed primarily by Christian fundamentalists who seek a way to hold up creationism as an alternative to evolution in the scientific debate about creation. Intelligent design proponents argue that the complexity of the universe leads to the conclusion that creation can only be explained by the presence of an "intelligent cause," nearly always assumed to be the Christian version of God. (*See* Creationism, Evolution).

Io

Io was the creator god of the Polynesian Maori of New Zealand. In one myth, he sings the world into existence.

Iroquois

The Iroquois are a confederacy of six eastern Native American tribes that speak the Iroquois language. The confederacy includes the Mohawk, the Seneca, the Oneida, the Onondaga, the Cayuga, and the Tuscarora. The Iroquois are matrilineal. The clan mothers or matriarchs tra-

ditionally choose the chiefs. The Huron and Cherokee speak languages related to the Iroquois language and are sometimes referred to as Iroquoian. (*See* Part II; Cayuga, Cherokee, Huron, Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Seneca, Tuscarora).

Isaac

Isaac, the son of Abraham (*See* Abraham) and Sarah is one of the heroes of Hebrew mythology. According to the story, God re-established a covenant with him that had originally been established with Abraham. That covenant would give the land of Canaan to the ancient Israelites.

Isis

See Osiris

Islam

The word *Islam* comes from the Arabic root *slm* meaning "to be whole and at peace." A *Muslim* is a person who surrenders to the order and peace that is the law of Allah as described in the holy book, the Qur'an. Islam was founded in Arabia by the Prophet Muhammad, the "Messenger of Allah", in the 7th century C.E . . . In 630 C.E. (AH 8), Muhammad and his followers took control of Mecca, the holy city of the Ka'bah ("cube") or "House of Allah," in the eastern corner of which is located the Black Stone. In theory, the Muslim does not pray to the stone as an idol but to God (Allah) at the stone. The Ka'bah, however, was considered a sacred place by Arabs even before the rise of Islam and probably was worshipped as a place holy to various deities of Arabian Mythology.

In the Holy Book we are told of five aspects of the Muslim faith: belief in Allah, angels, the Qur'an, the messengers of God (prophets), and the Day of Judgment. Based on these five beliefs, are the "Five Pillars of Islam": the public expression that "There is no god by Allah and Muhammad is his prophet;" the obligation of prayer five times a day while facing Mecca; almsgiving; fasting during Ramadan (the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar); and the *hajj*, or once in a lifetime pilgrimage to the Ka'bah at Mecca. Islam is a religion that is more concerned with social order than it is with religious ritual or myths.

There are, however, Islamic myths: myths of creation, myths of the afterlife, and myths of the end of the world, as in the other Abrahamic religions, Christianity and Judaism. And there are myths surrounding the Prophet Muhammad's life. But the primary concern has always been practical and rational Islamic Law in this world. Its very simplicity and directness has always made Islam a religion with great appeal. The religion has traveled easily, including in Africa, and, with special success, in Asia.

From the time of Muhammad's death in 632, however, Islam's history has been marked by a great schism and resulting wars. After the Prophet's death, a committee of prominent Muslim figures named Muhammad's longtime friend and father-in-law, Abu Bakr, as his successor and leader (Caliph) of the Muslims. This decision was challenged by members of Muhammad's family and their supporters. These people, the *Shi'a'Ali* ("Followers of Ali" and later simply the *Shi'a* Muslims, as opposed to Sunni Muslims)

believed the Prophet had named his cousin and son-in-law Ali, who was married to his daughter Fatima, as his successor. Much violence followed, and after the murder of the Caliph Uthman in 656, Ali (for the Shi'a, the "Lion of Allah") did, in fact, become Caliph. After more wars, Ali was apparently murdered by a poison weapon. Ali's successors among the Shi'a were given the title *Imam.* The most important of these Imams was Ali's son Husayn, who was killed by rivals in Karbala (in Iraq) and who became, with Ali, a significant Shi'a martyr and focus of religious zeal. Today, Shi'a Muslims and the much more numerous Sunni Muslims exist in sometimes uneasy proximity in the Muslim world.

At first, Muslims maintained good relations with the older Abrahamic monotheists, fellow people "of the Book", but struggles with Christians and Jews, who shared the Islamic sense of exclusivity, were inevitable. Like that of the Jews, especially, the nationalism of the Arabs was a tribal and religious nationalism for which certain compromises were impossible. Before long, in spite of internal struggles between factions such as the Ummayids and the Abbasids, led by different Caliphs, Muslim armies, now no longer exclusively Arab, advanced in all directions forming a great empire that would take in all of the Middle East, including Egypt and Persia. Muslim traders and settlers came to the Indian subcontinent within a generation of the Prophet's death. By the end of the seventh century C.E., Muslims had conquered parts of Afghanistan. In the early eighth century they had crossed the Straits of Gibraltar into Spain and in 732 they crossed the Pyrenees into France. By the middle of the eighth century C.E., Islam dominated Turkistan, and under the Samanids in the ninth and tenth centuries, Islam made inroads into the domains of the shamanistic and Christian peoples of the steppes of Central Asia. From the tenth century, Muslims began to conquer parts of the North Indian plain.

European Christians had long seen the march of Islam as both a territorial and religious threat. Holy Wars against Muslims took place almost from the earliest period of Muslim expansion—in Spain, in Sicily and in the Byzantine struggle for survival against the Turks. The fall of Jerusalem to the Selcuk Turks in 1077 set off waves of horror among Christians. Armed crusaders set out in waves to liberate Jerusalem and the "Holy Land" as a whole from the "Infidel" during the 12th and 13th centuries. Several crusades led to varying degrees of success, but failure usually followed. In 1229, for instance, Frederick II of Hohenstaufen won a victory and had himself crowned King of Jerusalem, but the city was retaken in 1244. Muslims ruled essentially all of the Middle East for several centuries after that. Parts of Bengal, Assam, and Orissa were taken early in the 13th century, and parts of Kashmir in the 14th. With the invasions of the Mongols and their tolerant attitude towards Muslims in the 13th and 14th centuries, Muslims became part of the ruling class in China.

In the early 16th century, the Muslim Mughal Dynasty was established on the ruins of the Muslim sultanate of Delhi by Babur, a descendant of Tamerlane and Ghengis Khan. The dynasty would rule Northern India and eventually control

most of the south as well until the last Mughal emperor was expelled by the British in 1858. Perhaps the greatest of the Mughals was Akbar, who reigned from 1556 to 1605 and was able, through tolerance and generosity, to win over his Hindu subjects. It was Akbar's grandson, Shah Janan, who built the Taj Mahal. Muslim armies would later move East and West, conquering much of the world, including parts of Christian Europe where the Ottoman army was finally stopped at the gates of Vienna in 1683.

After the defeat of the Ottomans at Vienna, Muslim power was diminished. The advent of European colonialism occurred in the 18th century and continued on in various degrees until the years following World war II when a still deeper rift developed between the Muslim Middle East and the West. With the formation of the state of Israel in what Arabs saw as their land, the rift became more profound and more specifically oriented. In 1967 Jews once again took power in all of Jerusalem, and today the struggle between Semitic peoples for the city that is holy to the three Abrahamic religions and for the land that was once Canaan is still running its course.

Islam remains the dominant religion of the Middle East, Central Asia, Pakistan and Afghanistan, Indonesia and Malaysia, as well as much of Africa, and Muslims are a significant minority in India.

Islam is dominated by the person of Muhammad. Muhammad's biography is historically fairly clear and Islam depends less on mythology than do Judaism and Christianity. Mythological tales of the Prophet did emerge from folklore, however, and two essential myths, that is, extra-ordinary or supernatural events do mark his canonical life. These are the passing to him by Allah of the Qur'an, the holy book of Islam, making him literally God's messenger, and his Night Journey, the journey to Jerusalem (*Isra*) and the Ascension (*Mi'raj*) from there to the Seventh Heaven.

Of course, the concept of Allah, the god of Ibrahim (Abraham), worshipped also by Christians and Jews, is central to Islam. An important Islamic myth concerns the "House of Allah", the old *Ka'bah* of Mecca, taken over by Muhammad and his followers from the old pre-Islamic Arabian religions as the focal point of Islamic worship. The Ka'bah is represented by every mosque, as synagogues everywhere represent the ancient Temple of Judaism and churches represent the place of crucifixion for Christians. The Ka'bah is said to have been originally built by Ibrahim and left under the guardianship of his son Isma'il (Ishmael), the founder of the Arabs. The Ka'bah remained for a time a holy place to Jews and Christians and people of other religions, too. But when the Prophet took control of Mecca he destroyed all of the idols that surrounded the sanctuary and it became primarily a goal of the Islamic pilgrimage, the *Hajj*, and the focus of the spiritual Hajj, which is the act of prayer.

At first under the influence of Judaism and Christianity and especially later due to the teachings of Muhammad, the Arabs moved from a polytheistic mythology to what the outsider might call a hero-based monotheistic one. As in the case of the development of Judaism, there is an early struggle before and during Muhammad's career between a monolatry in which a

high god presides as the most important god among many others, including important goddesses, and monotheism that saw the high god as the only god.

It is possible that for some time before Muhammad the Meccans had associated the term *al-Lah* with the supreme divinity behind the old tribal gods of Arabia. These Meccans apparently believed that the *Ka'bah* had in the beginning been dedicated to this deity. In fact, Muhammad's first biographer, Muhammad ibn Ishaq, records the possibly apocryphal story of several of Muhammad's tribe, the Quarysh, traveling north to discover the ancient pre-Jewish, pre-Christian religion of Ibrahim. Ibrahim was considered a prophet and the first Muslim, because in his willingness to sacrifice his own son he demonstrated *islam*, total obedience to God.

Allah is identifiable as the god of Abraham and the creator god of Christians and Jews, but as he reveals himself to his messenger Muhammad—for Muslims the "Seal of the Prophets," the interpreter with the last word, as it were—he projects different emphases than those of the god of Moses or Jesus. Like Jews and Christians, Muslims see this god as, above all, unique: "It has been revealed to me that your god is one god" (Qur'an 41:6). But the Qur'an (2:267; 4:171) specifically rejects the kind of theology that involves a divine intermediary between God and humans (e.g., a divine Jesus or "Son of God") or a God of more than one aspect (e.g., the Christian doctrine of the Trinity). Allah is less personal than in his Judeo-Christian aspect, a more mysterious power, which is nevertheless behind all aspects of the universe. He is knowable only through his creation, through the signs of nature, the metaphorical stories of the prophets, and especially through the Qur'an, his great gift to humankind. And though he is *al-'Azim* (the "inaccessible"), he is *al-Rahman* (the "compassionate" and the "merciful"). For the Islamic mystics or Sufis, especially, he is *al-Haqq* (the "real" and the "true"), and *al-Hayy* (the "living"), in some sense the god within.

Goddesses played an important role in pre-Islamic Arabian religion and mythology. Together these goddesses were the *banat al-Lah* (the "Daughters of God") and were much revered by the Meccans. When Muhammad forbade the worship of the banat al-Lah many of the first Muslims revolted. The historian Abu Jafar al-Tabari, in the tenth century, wrote that Muhammad was so upset by the split in his followers over the goddesses that he gave in and created some false or "Satanic verses", verses inspired by Satan, that allowed the *banat al-Lah* to be thought of as intercessors, like angels. Many Islamic scholars doubt that the incident of the Satanic Verses ever occurred, but according to al-Tabari, the angel Gabriel instructed Muhammad to do away with the lines and to replace them with a condemnation of the worship of these "empty names" (Qur'an 16: 57–59; 22:52; 52:39; 53:19–26).

Islam, of course, has its heroes or prophets who existed before Muhammad. Traditionally Ibrahim (Abraham) was thought to be the father of Islam in the sense that he knew the true God—*al-Lah*, the God later revealed as such to

Muhammad—before there were Jews or Christians. The Qur'an and Islamic tradition contain many myths of this *Khalilu'llah* or "Friend of God". One story says that Ibrahim cut up a crow, a vulture, and a peacock and then revived them simply by calling to them (2:262). It is believed that Ibrahim threw stones at the devil at Mina, near Mecca, where to this day pilgrims on the Hajj commemorate the act by throwing stones at a pillar of stone. Islamic tradition holds that Hajar (Hagar) was the first wife of Ibrahim and the mother of his first son Isma'il (Ishmael). Hajar and Isma'il were sent away by the jealous second wife, Sarah, mother of Ibrahim's second son Ishak (Isaac), also a prophet (4:163). While Hajar and Isma'il were wandering in the desert, the angel Jibril (Gabriel) opened the well of Zamzam for them so that they could survive. This well is in the place now called Mecca, and pilgrims still drink from it. Pilgrims also run between two hills representing Hajar's search for water. The story says that later Ibrahim, feeling guilty about having expelled Hagar and Isma'il, found his wife and child at the well and with Isma'il built the Ka'bah (2:124–140) according to Allah's specifications, as revealed by Jibril.

In the Qur'an, it is Isma'il who would have been sacrificed by Ibrahim had Allah not substituted a ram. When Ibrahim, his face drenched in tears, pressed the knife against his willing son's throat it would not penetrate the flesh. In fact, the knife spoke to the distraught father, telling him that the Lord had forbidden it from cutting Isma'il (37: 102–107). Isma'il is the symbol of the perfect Muslim child, one fully obedient to God. Not surprisingly, Muhammad was said to be a descendant of Isma'il.

Another important prophet for Muslims was Musa (Moses). It is recognized that God called Musa and that he revealed the *Tawrat (Torah)* to him (19:52; 20:9–23; 27:7–12; 28:29–35; 79:15–16). The Quaranic stories of Musa are essentially the same as those of Moses in the Bible.

Isa (Jesus) was the penultimate prophet of Islam. He is believed to be *Al-Maih* (the Messiah) and *kalima-t-allah*, "the Word of God", but not the Son of God (3:40, 4:169,171). Capable of miracles, Isa was especially successful at curing the sick (3:49, 5:30). In some sense, Isa was "raised up by God" (3:55) and many believe that he will come back.

Isa's birth was miraculous. Maryam (Mariam, Mary) for whom Sura 19 of the Qur'an is named, was visited by the angel Jibril (Gabriel), who lifted her dress and blew on her body, making her pregnant with the breath—the word—of God's spirit. Maryam gave birth to Isa next to a withered date palm and washed the child in a well placed there by Allah. The date palm tree suddenly flourished, and Jibril came back and advised Maryam not to make excuses for her mysterious pregnancy and birth-giving but to allow the young prophet to speak for her. Miraculously, Isa, although a newborn baby, could speak; he announced himself as a prophet, and people accepted his mother and him (3:45–46; 4:171; 19:16–27; 21:91;23:50; 66–12).

The Islamic equivalent of Exodus, the story of the journey from lowliness to

power of a people chosen of God, is the story of Muhammad. In the *hadith* and in folklore Muhammad became much more than a discontented merchant of Mecca, much more than a religious reformer, he became the world hero to whom God spoke directly and who could break the barriers of space and time in a journey to God's heaven. Muhammad is the great hero of Islam, the Prophet, the Messenger of Allah, the perfect man (*insan al-kamil*), the founder of the *ummah*, the Muslim community. This was a community that was to transcend barriers of race and ethnicity. Islam was to become, like Christianity before it, a universal religion. The *ummah* would replace the older Arabic community ideal of the *muruwab* that stressed utter and complete obedience to the clan chief and the validity of the blood feud. Muhammad replaced the loyalty of *muruwab*, with the ideal of *islam*, total obedience to Allah. Not surprisingly, however, since both *muruwab* and *islam* stress the importance of the group over the individual, elements of the old *muruwab* way sometimes surfaces in Islam even today. (*See* Abraham, Muhammad, Part II; Islamic).

Izanami and Izanagi

Izanami and Izanagi are the world parents of the Japanese creation myth. When at the beginning of time, chaos was overcome by the separation of Heaven and Earth, Izanami and Izanagi came into being.. The Izanagi-Izanami relationship brings to mind the *yin-yang* principle in China; Izanami was the passive principle—the "female who invites," and Izanagi was the active principle—the "male who proceeds." Their relationship reflects the storminess of creation itself. (*See* Part II; Japanese).

Jacob

Jacob and Esau were sons of Abraham's (*See* Abraham) son Isaac (*See* Isaac) in the Hebrew Bible. One day, on his way to Mesopotamia, Jacob had a vision of a ladder rising up to Heaven and of God reasserting the covenant made with Abraham and Isaac. Later, on his way back to Canaan, Jacob was approached by a man who wrestled with him. The man was apparently Yahweh himself, leading Jacob to proclaim, "I have seen God face to face." God changed Jacob's name to Israel, meaning "El (God) rules."

Jason and Medea

In Greek mythology, Jason was the son of Aeson, King of Iolcus. Aeson's brother, Pelias, usurped Aeson's throne while Jason was a child. When Jason was fully grown he returned to Iolcus to claim the throne of his father. Pelias, a son of Poseidon, agreed to give up the throne in return for the Golden Fleece, which, after many adventures, Jason succeeded in acquiring with the help of the mysterious and powerful Medea, daughter of the former owner of the fleece. When Pelias refused to give up the throne, Medea used her magic to kill him. For this crime the couple was exiled.

Jason and Medea moved to Corinth, where Jason became enamored of Glauce (Creusa), the daughter of King Creon. When Jason abandoned Medea for Glauce. Medea took revenge by sending Glauce a beautiful but magical garment that, when the girl put it on, caused her to burst into flames. Then Medea killed her own

children by Jason and fled to Athens in a chariot drawn by dragons.

Jesus

The biography of Jesus is contained in the four "gospels (<"good news"), attributed to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; in the Acts of the Apostles, also by Luke; and in various non-canonical apocryphal gospel texts such as the Gospel of Thomas and the Gospel of Philip. Mark and Matthew were Jewish followers of Jesus, writing in the period between 70 and 90 C.E., Luke was a non Jew writing in about 90 C.E., and the identity of John, who wrote in about 100 C.E., possibly in Ephesus, is unknown. Along with the commentaries by followers such as the extremely influential Paul of Tarsus (once Saul), these writings contain mythic elaborations of the historical life of the man Jesus, about whom little more is known than that he was an itinerant Jewish reformer with a significant following, who was crucified in the first century C.E. by the Romans.

It is the mythical or extraordinary events—his miraculous conception, his birth to a virgin, his temptation by the Devil, his death-defying miracles, his death on a cross and descent into hell, and especially his resurrection from the dead—in Jesus' life story that make him a symbolic figure around whom a major world religion was formed.

But the primary purpose of Jesus himself, as he is depicted in the stories of the New Testament, is to demonstrate his revised understanding of the Promised Land and the kingdom to be established by the Messiah predicted by Hebrew scripture. For Christians Jesus is the Messiah, the promised savior, the "new Adam" who replaces the old one and allows creation to begin again as it did after the flood. (*See* Christianity).

Jo-Uk

Jo-Uk or Juok, is the creator god of the Shilluk people who live along the Nile in Southern Sudan.

Judaism

The early history of what would later become Judaism is associated with the race known as the Hebrews and later, during the wars of conquest in Canaan, as the Israelites, who, late in the 10th century B.C.E., under King David, established a unified kingdom with a capital in what had been the Jebusite city of Jerusalem. Later in the century a civil war led to the establishment of two kingdoms, Israel in the north and Judah in the south. The early part of this history—from the stories of Abraham to those of Moses—is highly mythologized and is contained in biblical and apocryphal Hebrew texts. At its center is a personal god, Yahweh (*See* Yahweh)/Elohim(*See* Elohim), who spoke directly with and instructed Adam, Noah, the patriarch Abram/Abraham, his son Isaac, Isaac's son Jacob/Israel, and Moses (*See* Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses). It seems likely that the Hebrews of the pre-Judaic-Hebrew/Israelite period worshipped the God of Abraham—a tribal god—but were influenced by the religions of their fellow Semites, the Canaanites, perhaps most specifically by the Midianites of the northwest Arabian Peninsula, who contributed to the Israelites' absorption of the Yahweh cult. The influence of the Mesopotamians

of Babylon is also evident in the Book of Genesis in the *Torah*.

In the late 7th century B.C.E. the Babylonians, under King Nebuchadnezzar II of the Chaldeans gained predominance not only in Mesopotamia but in the Middle East in general. In several forays into kingdoms of Judah and Israel, ultimately resulting in the destruction of Jerusalem and its Yahweh temple, they gathered up Israelites, as Assyrian conquerors from Mesopotamia had done earlier, and took them into exile in Babylon.

Judaism and its beliefs as we know them today emerged in the period after what is known as the "Babylonian exile" of "Babylonian Captivity." When the Persians under Cyrus conquered Babylon in 539 B.C.E many of the Babylonian Israelites migrated home to Jerusalem and eventually rebuilt the city walls and the Temple. Others remained in Babylon where a Jewish community flourished for several centuries. Those who came to Jerusalem did so with Persian approval; in Cyrus's Zoroastrian (*See* Zoroastrian) view, Yahweh was among the deities on the side of good in the dualistic struggle between good and evil in the universe. Most important, the new arrivals in Jerusalem came as committed Jews rather than as Judeans or Israelites or Hebrews influenced as they had been earlier by the myths and religious ways of the indigenous Canaanites. Judah, with Jerusalem as its capital, became an exclusively Jewish theocratic state.

It was during the Babylonian period that the Israelite/Judeans emerged as Jews in the religious sense. The first books of the *Torah* were collated from earlier oral sources and rules of conduct and prayers to support cultural identity were developed around the Yahweh religion. The way was thus paved for synagogue worship and the emergence of rabbinical authority.

The Persian Empire under the Achaemenid Dynasty in the Middle East included not only Babylonia and Palestine, but Egypt and much of Anatolia. The empire lasted until 333–331 B.C.E., when Persia was conquered by Alexander the Great of Macedonia. With Alexander's early death in 323 the empire was divided up by his generals. The Ptolemys gained control in Egypt, the Seleucids and Parthians in Mesopotamia, Palestine, and Persia (Iran). Once again Palestine became a battlefield for rival factions from other lands. The Seleucids of Syria and the Ptolemys of Egypt took turns capturing Jerusalem. When the Seleucids desecrated the Temple in 168 a revolt led by the Maccabees, a dynasty of priests and kings, led to a brief period of independence for Judah.

In 63 B.C.E. the Romans annexed Palestine and ruled the land through a Roman governor. A Jewish king was allowed as well, much as Cleopatra (51–30 B.C.E.) was allowed to rule in Roman Egypt. Pontius Pilate was one such governor and Herod the Great (37–4 B.C.E.) was a famous king. In 66 C.E. the Jews rebelled against Roman rule, as they would later in Cyprus and Egypt. In 70 C.E. the temple was destroyed and soon after that large numbers of Jews were again forced out of Palestine.

The next years and centuries saw the development of various forms of religion springing directly or indirectly from the Jewish source. A rapid development of

Rabbinical Judaism, marked by the compilation of the *Mishnah* (interpretations of the *Torah)* and later by sections of the *Talmud* (a collection consisting of the *Mishnah* and the *Gemara*, commentary on the *Mishnah*) took place in Palestine and Babylonia. Gnosticism (*See* Gnosticism) and Christian (*See* Christian) monasticism emerged in Egypt, and Manichaeism, which was a blend of Christianity, Gnosticism, and Zoroastrianism, blossomed in Mesopotamia.

In the fifth century C.E. both Judaism, through the continuing process of Talmudic editing and rabbinical teaching, and Christianity through a series of church councils—held mostly in the Middle East—were engaged in a process of doctrinal, scriptural, and liturgical foundation building. In the sixth century, Christian dominance and Christian persecution of Jews both in the Middle East and Europe continued. The seventh century, however, gave birth to a religious movement that would also claim origins in the Semitic patriarch Abraham and that would challenge both of its Abrahamic predecessors for centuries to come. This was the religion of Islam (*See* Islam), which accompanied the influx of Arabs and Arab culture in the Middle East. (*See* Part II; Hebrew).

Jung, Carl

The Swiss psychiatrist Carl Gustav Jung (1875–1961), originally a follower of Sigmund Freud (*See* Freud, Sigmund), came to disagree with his mentor on various issues, including myth. Jung's theory of archetypes (*See* Archetypes) and a universal collective unconscious in addition to the personal unconscious studied by Freud, has influenced many mythologists. Whereas Freud was concerned primarily with the psyche of the individual, a psyche impacted by genes as well as by environment and experience, especially childhood experience, Jung, who did not discount the personal unconscious, put additional and special emphasis on a collective psyche revealed in certain universal psychic tendencies, or "archetypes," contained in myths and dreams and the artistic works of individuals. Such familiar archetypal themes as the hero quest, the ex nihilo creation, and the world parent creation, belong to humanity as a whole. They are elements of a collective unconscious. By studying the myths of a culture, including creation myths, Jung suggested, we study a culture's psyche. By comparing the myths of world mythology we study the human psyche as a whole.

Jupiter

Jupiter came to be seen by the Romans as a cognate of the Greek high god, Zeus, but, in fact, he existed in pre-Roman Italy as Jupiter Latirus and later, in archaic Roman times, as part of a triad of Jupiter-Mars-Quirinus, or sovereignty, power, and community.

Kachina

The Pueblo Indian peoples of the North American Southwest—especially the Hopi—celebrate spirit figures called *kachinas* (*katsina*). Kachinas are represented physically in small doll form for religious educational (and touristic) purposes, and impersonated by masked adult males in religious ceremonial dances. The Hopis say that their kachinas live in

the San Francisco Peaks, above Flagstaff, Arizona, and come to visit the Hopi villages for these ceremonies. The kachinas are, like the Japanese kami or spirits of other animistic (*See* Animism) traditions, both nature forces, who can bring rain, for example, and spirits of the dead who are said to become clouds. The Athabascan people in the same region have somewhat similar figures. These are the Navajo *yeii* and the Apache *hactin* (*See* Hactin, Yeii). For some Hopis goddess Hahaiwuhti is the mother of the kachinas. This is mythologically reasonable as Hahaiwuhti is a goddess associated with fertility, a concern also of the kachinas, who bring rain to feed the Hopi crops. There are Hopis who believe that the end of Hopi ceremonies and of the world as we know it now will come when a kachina takes off his mask in a dance and/or when a Blue Star kachina dances in a plaza, signifying the coming of a blue star in the sky. (*See* Part II; Acoma, Hopi, Pueblo People).

Kadifukke

In Baluba mythology of the eastern Congo region of Africa, the creator, Fidi Mkullu (*See* Fidi Mkullu), was threatened by a trickster-devil figure, Kadifukke, who claimed that he had been born directly of the earth, not created by Fidi Mkullu. The creator struggled with Kadifukke but was never able to completely defeat him.

Kagutsuchi

The Japanese Shinto god of fire, Kagutsuchi was the son of Izanagi and Izanami. During his fiery birth his mother's genital area suffered so much damage that she died and went to the other world. Her husband, Izanagi, was so angry that he decapitated his son, causing an emergence of deities from Kagutsuchi's blood and body parts.(*See* Part II; Japanese, Part III; Animism in Creation).

Kai Kai

The Mapuche of Chile tell of two essential powers, both embodied as serpents. Treng Treng (Tren Tren) was the earth serpent and Kai Kai the water serpent. Sometimes there was war between the serpents and once Kai Kai flooded the world.

Kalevala

The national epic of Finland, the *Kalevala* (Finland), was compiled by the poet Elias Lonnrot in the 19th century. The epic is a comprehensive collection of Finnic-Ugric myths and legends, based on oral traditions from the province of Karelia and elsewhere. Central characters in the epic are Vainamoinen, Ilmarinen, the rash hero Lemminkainen, and Louhi, the mistress-ruler of "North Farm." The *Kalevala* begins with an earth-diver creation myth featuring a sky maiden. The hero Vainamoinen is also born in the creation story, and the smith Ilmarinen creates the canopy of the heavens. Vainamoinen makes the wilderness fertile. After falling into the sea, he floats for a time until he is rescued and carried to North farm, where Louhi is mistress. In return for a promise to allow the now ancient Vainamoinen to marry her daughter, Louhi asks for the creation of the *sampo*, the great tripartite mill that can grind salt, grain, and gold, and Vainamoinen promises to send the craftsman Ilmarinen to make it.

Next comes the story of the death of the wild Lemminkainen in the Land of the Dead and his resurrection through the magic of his mother. Vainamoinen journeys back toward North Farm to ask for Louhi's daughter but discovers a rival in the form of the sampo builder Ilmarinen, who is favored by the daughter but is forced to perform several Herculean labors if he wishes to marry her. The maiden helps her lover to accomplish the tasks. When Ilmarinen's wife is killed by wild animals substituted for her cattle by the war hero Kullervo, Ilmarinen tries to craft a new wife.

Eventually Ilmarinen, Vainamoinen, and Lemminkainenen, the heroes of *Kalevala,* put aside their differences and go off together to North Farm to capture the sampo. At first they succeed, but Louhi pursues them, and, in a struggle at sea, the sampo sinks. Vainamoinen retrieves bits and pieces of the sampo and Louhi also manages to hold on to a piece of it. What follows is a long struggle between the Kalevala people and the forces of North Farm. In that struggle Louhi sends plagues against Kalevala and hides the sun and moon, which eventually the heroes succeed in forcing her to release.

The poem ends with the departure of Vainamoinen, and the baptism of a new king of Karelia. The old world has given way to the new. A poet uses the abandoned sacred harp of Vainamoinen to accompany the final song of the epic. (*See* Part II; Finnish).

Kali

Kali is one of several forms taken by the Great Goddess (Devi) of India. The black goddess of destruction, she is the logical wife for the god Shiva in the dance of existence, in which the god Brahma is the creator, Vishnu the sustainer-preserver, and he—Shiva—the destroyer. Shiva's dance is in the cosmic realm, Kali's is of this world. Her name is the feminine form of the Sanskrit *kala*, meaning "Time"—the relentless and devouring principle that makes death inevitable and measures life in the animate world. Kali is also related to the Vedic name for one of the tongues of the sacrificial fire. This goddess embodies the fact that, according to the Hindu, the world exists only by way of sacrifice; that is, the consumption of aspects of life is the source of prosperity. And it should be noted, in this connection, that "Prosperity" is the meaning of Lakshmi or Sri, the wife of Vishnu, the Preserver, as Kali is the wife of Shiva, the Destroyer.

In one popular depiction Kali, with wild eyes, bloody fangs, and human heads as a necklace around her neck, stands on an apparently dead Shiva, who nevertheless has an erection. The combination of this genital aspect, and the destructive nature of the Kali figure, and the fact that the goddess also carries a bowl overflowing with the abundance of life, would seem to suggest the necessity of death for fertility and the constant creation of life. Kali's rampages also represent the spiritual necessity of destroying our weaknesses so that we might discover our true selves. Kali is particularly popular among the southern Tamils, for whom she is Kottavei. She is associated with the violent goddess Durga, out of whose head she is said to spring when that goddess becomes angry. (*See* Part II; Indian Tantric).

Kami

Shinto (*See* Shinto), the indigenous pre-Buddhist religion of Japan is literally "the way of the *kami*." Kami are the vital spirits that inhabit all things in the animistic (*See* Animism) world of the Shinto world view. They originate in the realm of the five primordial deities who existed before the creation. All beautiful things can be worshipped as *kami.* For the Japanese Buddhist, the Shinto *kami* are sometimes seen as earthly representations of buddhas. In the Shingon Buddhist sect especially, the *kami* are outward representations of the Buddha Dainichi. (*See* Part II; Japanese).

Kamui

Kamui, the creator god of the Ainu of northern Japan, lived behind a huge wall and iron gate. He built the world on the back of a giant fish.

Kamunu

Kamunu was the disobedient first man of the Malozi creation in what is now Zambia.

Karora

Karora was the creator-dreamer of the Arandan people of Australia.

Karusakaibo

Karusakaibo is the creator in the mythology of the Brazilian Munduruc people.

Kenos

The culture hero of some of the Tierra del Fuego peoples in islands off the tip of Cape Horn, Kenos was the first man, sent by the creator to bring order to his earthly creation.

Keres

The Keres people are the Keresan-speaking people of several of the pueblos of Southwestern Native America. They include the members of the Acoma, Laguna, Santa Ana, Zia, San Felipe, Santo Domingo, and Cochiti pueblos (villages/reservations). (*See* Part II; Acoma, Laguna, Zia).

Keri

Keri was the son of the South American Mosetene creator, Dobitt. After Dobitt made humans, he sent his son Keri as a white condor to Earth to see what was going on. But the rope by which he was let down broke and Keri was killed. So Dobitt made a fish out of his son's head, and then came back to the world himself to complete the creation.

Kevish-Atakvish

For the Luiseño people of California in the beginning there was only Kevish-Atakvish (space void) or Omai-Yamal (nothingness).

Khepri

In ancient Egyptian Heliopolis, Kepri (Khepry) was the high god Ra (Re) as the scarab beetle who pushed the Sun into the sky. He was therefore, the rising sun who represented the dawn aspect of the high god and rebirth. (*See* Part II; Egyptian).

Khnum

Khnum was high creator god at the ancient Egyptian cult center at Esna, south of Thebes. He was depicted with the head of a ram. Knum created the primal cosmic egg at his potter's wheel. He was one of

the earliest of the *deus faber* (craftsman god) creators, although in some stories, Ptah, too, was such a creator, molding beings out of metal. (*See* Part II; Egyptian, Part III; Deus Faber Creation)

Khun Borom

The son of the high god, Indra, Khun Borom was sent to Earth to act as a culture hero for the newly created Laotian people (*See* Pu Ngoe Nga Ngo, Part II; Lao).

Ki

The Sumerian Ki was a personification of Earth and was female. Her mother was the goddess Nammu (Primeval Sea), who also gave birth to An (Heaven). An and Ki (Heaven and Earth) joined as Anki to produce Enlil (Air), who separated An and Ki.

Kiho

The Tuamotuan version of the Polynesian creator, Kino "lived alone in the emptiness under Havaiki, or nonland. His only company was his double, his Activating Self."

Killer of Enemies

Killer of Enemies is an important hero figure in the mythologies of the Athabascan peoples we know as the Apache and Navajo. Killer of Enemies was the Sun. He was assisted by Changing Woman, the Moon, in leading the people to the emergence (*See* Emergence).

Kinaalda

The Athabascan Native North Americans take very seriously a young girl's arrival at puberty and endow the event with a rite of re-creative supernatural dimensions in which the girl literally *becomes* divine for a time. As she begins her role as a woman, she takes on the fertility and curative powers of the primary goddess. Both the Apaches (Tinde) and the Navajos (Dine) celebrate this event. The Navajos call it the *kinaalda* and tell a myth about how the tradition began; the myth outlines the elements of the kinaalda as it is practiced to this day.

One day, the young goddess who would become known as Changing Woman (*See* Changing Woman), the greatest of Navajo goddesses, told her parents, First Man and First Woman, that she was experiencing her first menses. The first couple decided a celebration was in order. First Woman, taking the form of a character known as Ideal Woman, dressed the maiden in moccasins, leggings, a white dress, and jewels, and brushed her hair, all of this symbolizing the girl's taking on *hozho,* meaning beauty, or harmony. Then during each of the four days of the ceremony, the girl ran toward the east—toward the sun and beauty—and each day, Ideal Woman massaged her from head to toe, literally rubbing in the power of womanhood and the capacity later to produce the sacred twins (*See* Twins). Finally, on the last day after many more complex rituals, the maiden became Changing Woman, just as the girl in the *kinaalda* does. (*See* Part II; Navajo).

Kishelamakank

According to Lenape Indian mythology, In the beginning there was only empty space in which the creator, Kishelamakank, lived. Kishelamakank had a vision of a world and brought the details of the

vision to life by thoughts (*See* Part III; Thought-based Creation).

Kit-ka'ositiyi-qa

Kit-ka-'ositiyi-qa was the supreme divine power of the Alaskan Tlingit people. It was he who taught Raven (*See* Raven) to be a creator.

Kitchi Manitou

See Great Spirit

Kiva

A *kiva* is a ceremonial and social space—often, but not always, underground—peculiar to the ancient and modern Native Americans of the Southwest who lived and live in permanent villages. The ancient cliff dwellers, the Hopi, the Zuni, and the Keres and Tewa speaking Pueblo people of the Rio Grande area all have *kivas*. A *kiva* usually contains a small hole in the ground—called a *sipapu* by some—signifying the place from which the people originally emerged (*See* Emergence) into this world. Ceremonial dancers—including those representing *kachinas* (*See* Kachinas) emerge from *kivas* to begin their dances.

Klu Queen

A tradition among some Bon practitioners of Tibet holds that the basis of creation was the Klu Queen, a primordial goddess whose body literally became elements of creation. (*See* Part II; Bon)

Kojiki

The *Kojiki* ("Record of Ancient Matters") is one of the two major sources—the *Nihongi* (*See* Nihongi) is the other—of Japanese Shinto (*See* Shinto) mythology. The *Kojiki* was commissioned by the Japanese Emperor Temmu in the seventh century C.E. who wished to collect and record ancient myths and legends of Japan. According to tradition, the storyteller Heida no Are recited the legends to the scribe O no Yasumaro, who wrote them down. (*See* Part II; Japanese).

Kokomaht and Bakotahl

The creator of the Yuma Indians of Arizona emerged from the primordial waters as the twins, the good Kokomaht and the evil Bakotahl. The twins thus represent the essential duality in creation (*See* Part III; Twins in Creation, Duality in Creation).

Komashtam'ho

Kokomaht, the good twin of Yuma Indian mythology, made a son for himself out of the void, without a female. This boy—the first human—was Komashtam'ho.

Krishna

The most important avatar (incarnation) of the god Vishnu (Hari) is Lord Krishna, the "Dark One," Krishna is one of the most intriguing figures in Hindu mythology. There are various versions of each part of the man-god's history as recorded, for instance, in the *Mahabharata* (*See* Mahabharata)—especially in the highly philosophical section known as the *Bhagavadgita*. At times, Krishna seems to be more the ideal warrior king than an avatar, but at other times, as when he miraculously saves the Pandava wife Draupadi from shame during an attempt on the part of the Pandava rivals, the Kauravas to disrobe her, and as when he lectures the hero Arjuna in the *Bhagavadgita.* There he is very much

the god, the container within himself of the totality of creation itself. Derived from various sources, the story of Krishna conforms to the basic elements of the heroic monomyth (*See* Monomyth).

Krishna and his older brother Balarama are miraculously conceived in Devaki, by way of Vishnu with the help of the great goddess (Devi) as Maya ("holy illusion"). Devaki's husband and Balarama's and Krishna's surrogate father is Vasudeva. The wicked King Kamsa, fearing a prophecy of his own murder at the hands of a child of his cousin Devaki, commands that her children be killed at birth. To avoid this threat, the goddess takes the embryo out of Devaki and places it in Vasudeva's other wife, Rohini. Krishna is born to Devaki, but at birth, to protect him from King Kamsa, he is exchanged with a child of Yasoda, the wife of the cowherd Nanda. This child, a girl born at the same time as Krishna, is an incarnation of Maya, who, when she is murdered by Kamsa, thus serves as the necessary Hindu "sacrifice" (*See* Part III; Sacrifice as Creation) for the birth of something positive, in this case Krishna. Both Balarama and Krishna are adopted for their protection by Nanda and are raised along the river Yamuna among the cowherds.

As a very young child, Krishna performs miraculous initiatory feats and defeats demons (*asuras*). On one occasion, when his adopted mother looks into his mouth, she is astounded to see the whole universe there. Krishna is especially dear to the women cowherds, the *gopis.* Always something of a trickster, Krishna teases them. In one story he steals their clothes while they are bathing in the river and convinces them to leave the water with their hands held together over their heads, signifying worship and supplication. The *gopis* here embody deliverance that comes from the worship of Lord Krishna. One of the *gopis*, Radha, becomes his lover, a prime symbol of Krishna devotion. The erotic delight in Krishna as a representation of total devotion and joy is contained in the *Gitagovinda*, which some have compared to the Hebrew *Song of Songs*.

Another famous story of Krishna's youth is that of his struggle with the serpent monster, Kaliya. The boy Krishna went one day with his friends the *gopis* to the Yamuna River. The gopis and their cows were so parched by the heat of the day that they drank from the river that had been poisoned by Kaliya who lived beneath the water there. The gopis and the cows fainted from the pollution but were revived by a mere glance from the Lord. Krishna. Deciding to take direct action against Kaliya, Krishna climbed a Kadama tree and, after clapping his hands and tightening his loin cloth, dove into the river. The turmoil caused by the dive, and the fact that Krishna frolicked in Kaliya's particular dwelling pool like an elephant, destroyed the monster's home and enraged him. Kaliya attacked Krishna with all his might, wrapping his horrible coils around him. Krishna appeared to have been utterly defeated by the serpent. The gopis and their herds were miserable in their grief, thinking their lord, to whom they had dedicated their lives and their possessions, was dead.

Meanwhile, back in the village, there were many portents of evil, and Krishna's foster-father, Nanda, became

worried, as the boy had gone off without his brother Balarama, who could always be depended upon as a protector. The villagers and Krishna's other friends did not realize that Krishna was, in fact, an incarnation of Vishnu. Rushing to the river, they saw their beloved Krishna trapped in the serpent's coils, and the women went to the boy's mother and wailed over their loss. Nanda and others were about to dive into the pool to retrieve the body of their young lord, but Balarama prevented them, knowing who his brother was and that the monster serpent could not harm him.

Krishna now saw how unhappy his friends were, rose up out of the serpent's grip and proceeded to dance on the beast's hundred heads, destroying each one, as poison spewed from its body. So it was that the Lord Krishna overcame the evil that was Kaliya.

In adulthood, Krishna returned to his homeland of Mathura and killed Kamsa. He also became involved in the war between the Pandavas and Kauravas depicted in the *Mahabharata*, serving as the hero Arjuna's charioteer and mentor. His lesson as expressed to Arjuna is in the *Bhagavadgita* segment of the epic. When Arjuna declares his reluctance to carry on a war of needless slaughter of friends and relatives, Krishna reminds him that as a warrior, his only proper commitment is to *dharma*, proper action or duty according to his warrior caste. To worry about the effects of action based on *dharma* would be wrong. Krishna-Vishnu goes on to reveal to Arjuna the proper means of achieving oneness with Brahman.

Just after the war, Krishna dies, as he had predicted he would, when, in a position of meditation, he is struck in the heel by a hunter's arrow. His apotheosis occurs when he ascends in death to the heavens and is greeted by the gods. (*See* Part II; Indian).

Kronos and Rhea

Kronos (Cronos, Cronus), was a pre-Hellenic fertility-agricultural deity who, in Greek mythology was the youngest son of the original Titan sky and earth deities, Ouranos and Gaia (*See* Gaia, Ouranos) His name is related to the concept of time. Kronos rebelled against his father and performed the archetypal rite of the separation of Sky and Earth, making full creation between them possible. He did so by castrating his father as he lay on Gaia. Kronos, like his father, was a personification of Sky. And he married his sister Rhea, like her mother, an embodiment of Earth. It was Kronos and Rhea who produced the older generation of Olympians, headed by Zeus, who in a war in Heaven, would overthrow his father, as Kronos had overthrown his. In Rome, Kronos was thought to be the equivalent of the god Saturn. (*See* Part II; Greek).

Ku'ksu

Ku'ksu was the first male human, created by the creator, Earth Starter (*See* Earth Starter) of the Miadu Native Americans of California. The first woman was Morning Star Woman. Among the Pomo of California Ku'ksu was the brother to and advisor to the creator Madumda (*See* Madumda).

Kukulkan

Kukulkan is the Mayan name for the Aztec deity Quetzalcoatl (*See* Quetzalcoatl).

Kuma

For the Yaruro people of Venezuela everything sprang from the goddess Kuma, and everything that the Yaruros do was established by her. She is dressed like a shaman, only her ornaments are of gold and much more beautiful than an ordinary shaman's.

Kumokums

Some Modoc Indians of Oregon say the creator was Kumokums, who made the world by reaching way down to the bottom of the primordial lake to get some sand to make land. He then played with the sand, making mountains, rivers and other things. Some Modoc call the creator Old Man or Kumush (*See* Kumush).

Kumpara

The creator of the Jivaro Indians of Peru and Ecuador was Kumpara. His wife was Chingaso, and their son was Etsa, the sun. One night Kumpara placed some mud in his mouth and spit it onto his son. In this way the girl Nantu, the moon, was conceived.

Kumush

Many Modoc Indians of Oregon say that the creator was Old Man, Kumush. He and his daughter created the Indian tribes with bones from the spirit world. Others call the creator Kumokums (*See* Kumokums).

Kunapipi

A creation myth from Arnhemland in Australia contains the story of Kunapipi, the mother goddess who existed before all things and whose body is the animistic (*See* Animism) basis of Earth itself (*See* Part II; Yolugu).

Lac Long Quan and Lady Au Co

One Vietnamese story tells how Lac Long-Quān, the sea-based Dragon Lord, married Lady Au-Co, the earth-based mountain fairy and how after their coupling Au-Co gave birth to a sack containing 100 eggs, one of which contained the Vietnamese culture hero, Hung Vuong (*See* Hun Vuong).

Lakshmi

A form of the Hindu goddess (Devi) as the wife of the cosmic preserver god Vishnu, Lakshmi (Sri), stands for prosperity and good fortune in this world. Lakshmi is Vishnu's *shakti*, the energy that gives him form. When Vishnu sleeps on the serpent Sesa (Ananta) during the cosmic night before the creation of the world, Sri is at his feet as Bhu ("Earth"), ready to be united with him when he awakens. By extension, Sita, the wife of the great Vishnu avatar Rama, is an incarnation of Lakshmi. Lakshmi is also incarnate in Draupadi, the wife of the Pandava brothers in the *Mahabharata*. Prosperity in India is associated with gold, so when a bride brings gold in some form to her marriage, she comes to the marriage as Lakshmi. To preserve Lakshmi—prosperity—proper sacrificial rituals must be performed, because, as in the cosmos, prosperity on Earth depends on sacrificial destruction. (*See* Lila, Part II; Indian).

Lama

Mongolian Buddhists (*See* Buddhism) say that in the beginning, Lama, the "superior one" of Tibetan Buddhism,

descended from the heavens and stirred the primordial waters causing a congealing of the waters into land.

Laws of Manu

The Indian *Laws of Manu* (*Manava Dharmasastra* or *Manusmrti*) were composed between 200 B.C.E. and 200 C.E. The *Laws* are related to the Vedic revelations. They are treatises on *dharma*, the proper righteous way of orderly life for Hindus, depending on caste and status. Finally, they are the worldly laws derived from the cosmic ones of the *Vedas*. Their authorship is attributed to the mythical Manu Svayambhu, the first of the *manus*, or fathers of humanity. The *Laws* provide us with certain mythical constructs as well. There is, for example, an elaboration on the Vedic creation myths as when we are told that Brahman (*See* Brahman)—that which is self-existent, the Absolute—created the chaos and the seed out of which he was born. During his year in the cosmic egg of his own making, Brahman created existence by way of his own thoughts.

Ligoububfanu

Ligoububfanu was the mother of humans, animals, coconuts, and grain according to a Truk Island myth.

Lila

Lila ("Divine Play") is a personification of the consort of the great Hindu god Vishnu, the goddess Lakshmi (see above). Lakshmi was the world waiting for creation within the sleeping Vishnu. Lila is the created would outside of Vishnu (*See* Vishnu). See Indian Creation).

Lilith

In Hebrew tradition there is the story of how Adam, Yahweh's first human creation, had a wife before Eve and that she was called Lilith. Lilith was too arrogant to lie in the passive position under Adam and chose to leave her husband, becoming the first feminist rebel. (*See* Part II; Hebrew, Talmudic)

Little Turtle

Little Turtle was the creator of the sun according to the Wyandot people of Kansas.

Logos

The Greek word *Logos* has its source in the verb to "say." As speech implies reason, philosophers have applied the word to reason itself, specifically, the reason that supports creation. In the Christian creation story of the gospeler, John, Logos is identified as (in English) "the Word," incarnated as Jesus. For John Jesus was both man and god, who lived with humans in the world but who, as an aspect of God (*See* God) was there at the beginning of creation as the ordering principle: "He was in the world and the world was made by Him."

Loki

In Norse mythology (*See* Norse Mythology), Loki is the son of giants. Among the gods he is known as a trickster and mischief-maker. Like all tricksters he is ruthless and has insatiable appetites and can change shapes at will. He can look like a god or he can become a flea or a salmon or a bird. Gender is no barrier to his shape-shifter powers; he can even

bear a child, as when he takes the form of a mare, mates with Svadilfari, the giant stallion and gives birth to the high god Odin's eight-legged horse Sleipnir. And as a male, he fathers three terrible children with the giantess Angrboda. These are the monstrous wolf Fenrir, who plays such an important role in the end of the world events, the serpent Jormungard who bites his own tail and forms a circle around Midgard, the land of the humans, and the daughter Hel, ruler of the underworld place of that name.

Loki plays a particularly evil role in the myth of the death of the much-loved Balder.

After the death of Balder Loki is bound up like the Greek Prometheus and left to be tortured until the end of the world.

Lone Man

The culture hero of the Mandan tribe of Native North America, Lone Man is clearly influenced by stories of Jesus told to the people by Christian missionaries. Lone man was with the Creator during the creation. Later he entered the world as a human by becoming a kernel of corn, which a virgin ate and made her pregnant. This process gave Lone man his means of entering the human world. Once with the people he became their culture hero, teaching them proper behavior and survival methods. Later he left the world, promising to return one day. (*See* Part II; Mandan).

Long, Charles H.

A major scholar of Religious Studies, Charles H. Long has written one of the most important books on creation mythology (*Alpha: The Myths of Creation*) in which he outlines and discusses the five major creation myth types (*See* Part I). Following the scholar Mircea Eliade (see above), Long suggests that myths, and particularly creation myths, exist "along side of scientific knowledge," that myths express our psychic and religious relationship to the world as opposed to our scientific relationship. Creation myths "express the power, spontaneity, absoluteness, plenitude, and mystery of reality in symbolic form" (Long, 15–20, *See* Introduction).

Long Sash

Long Sash was a culture hero of the Tewa people of southwestern North America. He led the people after the emergence (*See* Emergence).

Lowa

The Marshall Islands creator was Lowa, the uncreated. In the beginning he was alone, but he created the world by making a humming sound.

Mabinogion

The *Mabinogion*, a collection of tales from Wales, is found in two 14th century manuscripts, the *White Book of Rhydderch* and the *Red Book of Hergest.* The Collection is based on earlier oral narratives. The *Mabinogion* is made up of four sections known as the "Four Branches" and four tales called "Independent Native Tales." Included in the overall work is the earliest known Welsh story involving King Arthur's court, "Culhwch and Olwen," and three later Arthurian romances. The "Four Branches" are about

the Children of Don, gods who are mythologically related to the Irish Tuatha de Danann (*See* Tuatha de Danann).

Madumda

Madumda was the primary creator in the mythology of the Pomo Indians of California. He was advised by his brother, Ku'ksu. The brothers began the creative process with skin scraped from their armpits and by singing a creation song.

Magyar

Magyars are the primary ethic group of Hungary. The group takes its name from Magyar, the sun god in Magyar-Hungarian mythology. Magyar was the son of the ancient sky god and the Great Mother. His name is derived from the term meaning "human". It was he who instigated the creation of humans (*See* Part II; Hungarian).

Mahabharata

The Sanskrit Hindu epic, the *Mahabharata* is perhaps the world's longest literary work. It is, for instance, eight times as long as Homer's (*See* Homer) *Iliad* and *Odyssey* combined. While not considered "revealed" (*sruti*), or sacred text, like the *Vedas*, the epic is a traditional (*smrti*) source for many of the most popular and complex myths and legends of Hinduism and India. It is considered a reliable source for questions having to do with proper actions and social arrangements—that is, with dharma—and the relations between the human and divine worlds. *Mahabharata* means "Great (*maha*) Story of the Bharatas", the Bharatas being the legendary first Indians and, by extension, Hindus. The central issue of the epic is the war between Bharata descendants, the Pandavas and the Kauravas, which, according to tradition, took place on the sacrificial field of Kuruksetra in 3200 B.C.E. . . . "The Epic", as it is sometimes called, continues to be performed and read all over India. There are even comic book versions widely sold. The work contains 18 books (*parvans*) and is supplemented by the *Harivamsa*, a genealogy of Hari (Vishnu).

The legendary author of the *Mahabharata* is Vyasa, a particularly powerful sage, or *rsi*, otherwise known as Krishna Dvaipayna—the "island-born Krishna," and is, thus, perhaps an avatar of Vishnu. The epic was said to have been dictated by Vyasa to the elephant-headed god Ganesha, who used one of his tusks as a pen. Sometimes the work is called the "Veda of Krishna", suggesting a religious connection between Vyasa and the Krishna-Vishnu figure who is so central to the epic, particularly to the highly philosophical section we know as the *Bhagavadgita* (*See* Bhagavadgita) Vyasa is also said to have brought the *Vedas* themselves to humanity. There is a tradition that holds that Vyasa was the begetter of the Bharatas, the ancestors of both the Pandavas and Kauravas.

In fact, the authorship of the epic was collective and gradual. Much of what was transcribed by *brahmans* in the fifth century B.C.E. was based on earlier material, reaching back to ancient tribal warfare, and additions were made to the text as late as 500 C.E.

The stories of the *Mahabharata* are clearly representative of cosmic religious issues. The *Mahabharata,* as *smrti,* is an example of particular sectarian devotion (*bhakti*) in connection with Krishna-Vishnu, as well as a re-examination of older Vedic ideas of *dharma* and Brahmanic sacrifice.

The epic begins with the establishment of the need for sacrifice in order that true prosperity (*sri*) might be restored. The Goddess as Earth, is oppressed by demons and general evil. Vishnu and several other gods descend to Earth to relieve her. Vishnu is Krishna, friend and cousin to the Pandava brothers, who are fathered by gods for whom they become earthly vehicles or *avatars*. The Pandava king, Yudhisthira, is fathered by Dharma, who embodies that proper order and duty that needs to be reestablished in the world. The brothers Arjuna and Bhima, whose mother, Kunti, is also the mother of Yudhisthira, are fathered by the gods Indra and Vayu, representing warriors. The lesser brothers, the twins, Nakula and Sahadeva, whose mother is Madri, are fathered by the twin physician gods, the Asvins, who represent social welfare here. Together, the Pandavas, supported by Krishna, stand for proper action and social arrangement (*dharma*). Significantly, the Pandavas share one wife, Draupadi, who is an incarnation of Sri/Lakshmi, the wife of Vishnu. As such, she is "Prosperity." Opposed to the Pandavas are their hundred Kaurava cousins, led by the arrogant Duryodhana, who embodies cosmic discord and is allied with Karna, the son of the Sun god Surya by Kunti. Together the Kauravas represent *adharma*, or the opposite of *dharma*. With the physical and philosophical opposition of the cousins, the stage is thus set for a war that will be the cleansing sacrifice between ages (*yugas*) and a lightening of Earth's burden.

When, after political struggles and a decision to divide the kingdom, Yudhisthira lays claim to universal kingship, Duryodhana challenges him to a game of dice. In this famous game, Yudhisthira loses everything, including the joint Pandava wife Draupadi. He thus gambles away prosperity. The Kauravas attempt to disrobe Draupadi in order to insult and humiliate her and her husbands but are prevented from doing so by the powers of Krishna, who makes Draupadi's sari an endless garment. After losing another gambling match, however, the Pandavas are exiled for 13 years. The religious significance of the exile is that it stands for the period of preparation (*diksa*) for a sacrifice.

The ensuing war between the Pandavas and Kauravas is prepared by Krishna, who, as the *avatar* of Vishnu, knows it must take place in order that Sri (Prosperity) can be restored to Earth. Early in the great battle, Arjuna begins to doubt the value of the inevitable carnage and has to be convinced through the divine revelations of Krishna—his charioteer—of the necessity of the sacrifice in the interest of *dharma.* These revelations form the *Bhagavadgita*. The war is the war to end wars, resulting in the victory of the Pandavas but the death of almost everyone. It is the universal sacrifice that will bring to an end the age (*yuga*) that precedes our own *kaliyuga.* Vishnu has thus achieved

the original goal of coming to the rescue of Earth. (*See* Hinduism, Part II; Indian).

Mahadeo

In India, the Gond creator, Mahadeo, a name meaning "Great God", is a version of the Hindu god Shiva. His wife is Parvati, the name also of Shiva's wife (*See* Part II; Gond).

Mahakala

In the Tantric tradition of India, the great (*maha*) goddess Time created all things, including Kali, or Mahakali, a female version of herself, and Mahakala, a male version. From the union of this male and female came the first humans.

Mahavira

A contemporary of the Buddha (*See* Buddha), Mahavira was the last of the 24 great teachers of the Jain religion in India (*See* Part II; Jain).

Malsum

The Great Mother of the Algonquin of Canada gave birth to the twins Glooskap (or Michabo, a form of Nanabozho among other Algonquians) and Malsum. Glooskap was an embodiment of goodness and creativity. Malsum (the Wolf) embodied evil and destructiveness (*See* Part III; Twins in Creation).

Mancho Capac

See Inca, Pachacamac, Part II; Inca

Mangala

Mangala is a name of the god of the Mande people of Mali in Africa. He made seeds, which produced the first people, including the twins, Faro and Pemba (*See* Faro and Pemba).

Mani

Mani was an important philosopher of Gnosticism, suggesting that everything in creation is a struggle between good and evil, light and darkness (*See* Part II; Gnostic, Part III; Duality in Creation).

Manitou

The *Manitou* or *wakan* is a spiritual presence and power among the Native North Americans of the Plains and Woodlands. The *Kitchi Manitou* is the "Great Spirit" or "Great Mystery" (*See* Great Spirit) something like a supreme deity.

Mantis

For the Bushmen of Africa, Mantis was the creator of almost everything. In the early days he lived on Earth with humans but became disgusted with them and left (*See* Deus Otiosus).

Manu

For Hindus time is made up of *manavantara,* ages that last 4,320,000 years. Each of these ages is marked by a First Man, a demiurge named Manu—in the Hindu scheme of things, has a demiurge a *Manu,* who is the progenitor of the human (*manava*) race. The very first Manu was Svayambhuva, who produced the *Laws of Manu* (*See* Laws of Manu). The Manu of the present age is Satyavrata (Vaivasvata), son of the sun (Vivasvat). This Manu was given the *Vedas* so that he might teach the human race *dharma* (duty). (*See* Part II; Indian, Part III; Ages of Creation).

Manuna

Manuna, or "Earth Maker" was the North American Winnebago Great Spirit who in the beginning became a creator when he came to consciousness and realized he was alone.

Maori

The Maori are the Polynesian people of New Zealand. The name Maori is also that of the creator god of the Wahungwe people of Zimbabwe.

Marduk

Marduk is the most powerful god in the Babylonian creation epic, the Enuma Elish (*See* Enuma Elish). The patron god of Babylon, he was a gigantic being with four heads. a storm-god whose rise to power coincides with the rise of King Hammurabi early in the second millennium B.C.E. Before his ascendancy to chiefdom among the Babylonian gods in the 12th century, B.C.E., he had been a relatively minor figure in the Mesopotamian pantheon, albeit, the son of Ea (*See* Enki). Powerful as he was—he was represented by a young bull—he was considered to be an accessible god, who listened to human prayers and cared about human problems. He was a popular god who was considered to be a deity accessible in prayer, one who cared about human beings and their problems.

Marungere

Marungere was the creator of the Papua Kiwai people of New Guinea.

Massassi

Massassi or Morning Star was given as the "first woman" to Mwuetsi (*See* Mwuetsi), the moon, the first man in Wahungwe mythology in Zimbabwe.

Matrilineal

Certain cultures, including many Native North American tribes—are matrilineal. That is descent and often ownership are passed down through the maternal rather than the paternal line. This does not mean that matrilineal societies are necessarily matriarchal, that is led by women. In short, a society may be politically and religiously patriarchal and still be matrilineal in terms of family and ownership. The role of men and women is sometimes reflected in a culture's creation myths. In the Acoma creation, for example, a god is the original creator but it is goddesses who teach the people and lead them in the creative process. Acoma is matrilineal. (*See* Part II; Acoma).

Maui

In New Zealand, Maui is the trickster-hero son of the Maori god Tangaroa. Some say that the sun is the eye of Maui and that the eyes of his children were the evening and morning stars. In one story, Maui was thrown into the sea by his moon mother, Taranga, and rescued by the god Io, who hung him on the roof of his house. Maui gave fire to humans, and he died in a search for immortality.

Mawu

The Great Mother creator of the African Fon people, Mawu created everything from the back of the rainbow serpent Aido Hwedo, the principle of motion that keeps the celestial bodies moving.

Mayuruberu

The creator of the Ipurina people of Brazil, Mayuruberu, the chief of the Storks, made a huge pot of boiling water in the sun overflow to flood his creation.

Mbir

See Worm

Mbokomu

In the mythology of the Ngombe of Central Africa, a woman, Mbokomu, who at first lived in the heavens, became so irritating to the creator, Akongo, and the people there that Akongo dropped her, her children, and some food down to Earth in a basket. These were the first people on Earth.

Mebere

Mebere is a creator god of the Bantu-speaking Fang or Fan of Africa. Some Fang say that Mebere made the first human out of clay, but in the form of a lizard. Another myth describes a high god, Nzame, of which Mebere is one of three parts.

Melanesia

Melanesia is a term used to designate several islands within the in the western Pacific "Oceanic" island groups that also include Micronesia and Polynesia (*See* Micronesia, Polynesia). Usually the term "Melanesia" refers to New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, New Hebrides (Vanuatu), New Caledonia, the Fiji Islands, and several smaller islands. As there is a great deal of cross-cultural influence among the peoples of the Western pacific there is overlapping of the mythologies of these areas. The mythologies of Melanesia are full of spirits that affect humans directly. Although not common, there are a few Melanesian creation myths (*See* Part II; Bank Islands, Fiji Islands, New Hebrides).

Melu

The creator god of the Bagobo people of the Philippines, Melu was white and had gold teeth. He created the earth out of the material derived from the constant polishing of his teeth and skin. He also made two small people in his image.

Membe'e

The Bulu people of Cameroon say that in the beginning there was Membe'e, who holds up the world.

Memphis

An ancient capital of Egypt, Memphis is the Greek name for Ineb-Hedj, the "City of White Walls". Memphis was near what is today Cairo.

Mesoamerica

The term "Mesoamerica" refers to the land of the pre-Columbian (pre-Spanish conquests of the 15th and 16th centuries) cultures of Mexico and Central America, including the Olmecs, Toltecs, Aztecs, Mayans, Mixtecs, Zapotecs, et al.

Mesopotamia

Meaning "Land Between Two Rivers" in Greek, "Mesopotamia" refers to the land between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers in what is today Iraq and bits of Syria and Turkey. Mesopotamia saw the rise and fall of several great civilizations beginning with the Sumerians as early as the 6th millennium B.C.E. The Sumerians were later replaced by Semitic peoples,

including the Akkadians, Babylonians, and Assyrians. Under the Islamic caliphate in the 7th century C.E. Mesopotamia became Iraq. (*See* Part II; Assyrian, Babylonian, Sumerian).

Metamorphoses

Ovid (43 B.C.E.–17C.E.) the great Roman poet, tells a Roman version of the Greek creation myth in his *Metamorphoses* a primary source for Roman mythology.

Micronesia

Micronesia is made up of several western Pacific islands, including the Gilbert, Marshal, Mariana, Caroline and Pelew groups. As a cultural phenomenon, Micronesian mythology has been influenced by the other main Oceanic cultures—those of the Melanesians (*See* Melanesia) and, especially, the Polynesians (*See* Polynesia). In most cases Micronesian creation stories involve a deity who existed before anything else.

Many myths about the origins of fire exist in Micronesia. It is said in some places that a boy named Te-ika ("The Fish") caught a sunbeam in the ocean. The beam caused fires that threatened to destroy the sea world, so the Shark king of the sea, exiled the boy to the land, where Tabakea, the king killed the boy with sticks that absorbed the power of the sun. The king brought the boy back to life by rubbing the sticks together, but the boy soon died again.

Middle East

Several terms have been applied to the region of the world we generally think of now as the Middle East. The "Fertile Crescent" is a term referring to an arch formed around the Syrian steppes and including the eastern Mediterranean lands of the Egyptian Delta, southwestern Anatolia (Turkey), and Mesopotamia (Iraq). The "Levant" was a European term referring to the eastern Mediterranean countries. In the British colonial period the "Near East" meant Asia Minor and the Balkans. Nowadays "Fertile Crescent" and "Levant" seem outmoded, and "Middle East" and "Near East" (the latter increasingly less often) are used more or less interchangeably to refer to a geopolitical area that includes Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Israel and Palestine, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, and Egypt and Iran. Other than Israel, the Middle East is overwhelmingly Muslim.

Milesians

In the complex story of the invasions of the island that became Ireland, the Gaels or Irish Celts were represented by the Milesians or Sons of Mil, Mil Espaine ("Soldier of Spain"). (*See* Part II; Irish).

Monism

Monism is the belief in a unified absolute that includes all reality such as the Hindu concept of Brahman (*See* Brahman). Because of the belief in a divine unity, monism is relatable to monotheism (see below) but in India, for example, with the acceptance of the absolute's many divine incarnations, it clearly has a polytheistic aspect (*See* Hinduism above, Part II; Indian).

Monolatry

Monolatry (monolatrism) refers to a situation in which people recognize the existence of many gods but worship only one. An example might be that of the

ancient Israelites in the land of Canaan. (*See* Judaism).

Monomyth

Mythologist Joseph Campbell (*See* Campbell, Joseph), through a comparison of hero myths, reveals a universal hero myth Taking a word coined by James Joyce, Campbell calls the archetypal hero myth the "monomyth." The hero of the monomyth passes in his adventures through a series of transformative thresholds, which are representative of the psychic and, to an extent, the physical life. The middle of the hero's life is made up of three essential elements: the *Departure* from home (the status quo), the *Adventure* in the unknown world, and the *Return* with some new understanding. These three elements are framed by an appropriately heroic beginning and ending. The beginning is often a miraculous conception and birth. Often the hero is born of a virgin. Almost always he or she comes at a time of great need—the darkest night of the cultural year, a time of general suffering, a period representing the darkness and, more often than not, the suffering that exists in our unconscious or subconscious individual and collective selves.

The hero birth, then, is the hope for a new beginning, a new creation. The hidden place—the stable, the grove of trees, the cave—where the hero is often born and the painful times in which he emerges remind us that even the gods require the elements associated with the mother—earth, flesh, pain—to enter the world as one of us. Not surprisingly, the new born hero is almost immediately threatened by the kings, jealous fathers, or demons who cannot tolerate the presence of a force for new understanding. As a child, the hero must somehow prove himself/herself. Signs of the divine essence must shine through. Once adulthood is achieved, the hero frequently undergoes a preparatory period of isolation before receiving a call to action, which the hero sometimes initially refuses. All of these events are preparation for the beginning of the hero journey, the hero quest.

The adventure of the hero is marked by several universal themes. The first of these is the search. Sometimes the questing hero looks for something lost or something that promises new power. he quest always involves difficult trials. There are giants, dragons, sorcerers, evil kings who stand in the way. And there are tests. Many heroes must die and descend to the place of death itself, sometimes as scapegoats for the mistakes of others. In death, the hero is planted in Mother Earth and during that period, which we recognize as the ultimate period of dark gestation, he confronts the most terrifying terrors and demons of the underworld. But the hero returns, usually in the spring, re born as the representative of a new creation, a new beginning.

Monotheism

Monotheism is the belief in only one god. The three Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam), who all claim to worship the God of Abraham (*See* Abraham), are often referred to as "the monotheistic" religions. (*See* Monism, Monolatry).

Morning Star Woman

See Ku'ksu

Morongo

Morongo ("Evening Star") was the second woman sent to Mwuetsi (*See* Mwuetsi), the first man (the Moon) to continue the creative process in the mythology of the Wahungwe of Zimbabwe.

Moses

Moses is Judaism's (*See* Judaism) greatest hero and a central figure in the aspect of Hebrew mythology contained in the Book of E*xodus* in the *Torah* (Old Testament). According to *Exodus* the pharaoh decided that the Hebrews, who were serving as slaves in his country, had become too numerous. So the pharaoh ordered that all newborn Hebrew boys be thrown into the Nile to drown. The bay who would become Moses was one of these children, not only hero child in mythology to be threatened by the murderous edict of a wicked king. As so often happens in stories of this type, the child is both abandoned and rescued. Moses' mother placed her baby in a watertight reed basket and set him afloat in the river to avoid the massacre The boy's sister Miriam watched as the basket was discovered by a daughter of the pharaoh, who adopted the child as her own. Miriam quickly took the baby's biological mother to Pharaoh's daughter and offered her as a wet nurse. The leaving of the baby in a basket on a river ties Moses to the unusual beginnings of several mythological or legendary heroes, including, for instance, Sargon of Akkad and Siegfried in Germany.

The story continues with Moses, now an adult, killing an Egyptian for mistreating two Hebrew slaves. Forced to flee for his life, he found his way to Midian, not far from Edom, the land founded by Jacob's brother Esau, and there he married Zipporah, a daughter of a Midianite priest called Reuel (sometimes Jethro). Moses remained in Midian for 40 years as a shepherd. Meanwhile, the Hebrews continued to suffer in Egypt.

One day Moses was on a mountain (Horeb or Sinai) when, out of a burning bush, a voice revealing itself as that of Yahweh, the "I Am" the god of "your fathers," Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Exodus 3: 14–15), established Moses clearly at the next stage of the traditional hero journey by calling him to action. Moses was to return to Egypt to lead the Hebrews people out of slavery into Canaan. At first Moses claimed inability to do such a thing. That is, he refused the call, as so many would-be heroes do. But by various signs, including turning Moses' staff into a serpent, Yahweh demonstrated that divine power would be behind the mission. So it was that Moses, accompanied by his priestly brother Aaron, made his way back to Egypt to work on fulfilling the Promised Land Covenant made with Abraham and confirmed with Isaac and Israel-Jacob (6:2–8).

Pharaoh refused to let the Hebrews go, so Yahweh sent a series of plagues to Egypt, always sparing the Hebrews. When Pharaoh still refused to free the Hebrews, Yahweh arranged a final disaster for the Egyptians. Each Hebrew family was to mark its doorpost with the blood of a slaughtered lamb and to eat a ceremonial meal while the Angel of Death passed over the marked houses and killed the oldest male child in each Egyptian house. After this establishment of what for Jews would become

the Passover, Pharaoh agreed to let the Hebrews go.

As Moses and his people followed Yahweh's pillar of cloud by day and pillar of fire by night the pharaoh changed his mind and followed them with an army. When the Hebrews came to the Sea of Reeds, Moses raised his staff over it, and Yahweh caused a great wind to push aside the waters so the people could pass through. The Egyptians pursued, and the god allowed the waters to return and the pharaoh's army was annihilated.

During the period in the wilderness that followed the people complained to Moses and Aaron of their plight, and Yahweh sent *manna*, sacred food, on which the Hebrews fed for forty years. Drink was provided when Moses used his staff to strike the rock at Horeb and water came from it.

Perhaps the most important mythic moment of the Exodus was God's gift to Moses of the Ten Commandments and the Book of the Covenant, the *Torah,* on Mount Sinai. But while Moses was again away on Mount Sinai, the Hebrews began to complain. To placate them and give them something concrete to worship, Aaron made golden calves. Moses returned and in his fury at this apostasy broke the stone tablets on which God's words were recorded. Later Yahweh provided new tablets, which were stored in the portable tabernacle called the Ark of the Covenant, the symbol of Yahweh himself. The Ark would become an important element in Jewish mythology. Its cult was officially recognized by David after his conquest of Jerusalem (for Jews, the City of David on Mount Zion) in about 1000 B.C.E. The First temple, that of Solomon in c. 950 B.C.E., housed the ark and became the principal national and religious center of the Israelites. The Ark disappeared when the Babylonians destroyed the Temple in 587 B.C.E., and it was not in the Second temple of 516 B.C.E.

The story of Moses continues in the three biblical books that follow Exodus. According to those books, the people rebelled against Moses and Yahweh, going so far as to indulge in Canaanite fertility rites and Baal worship. Yahweh punished the people but they continued in their apostasy. Deuteronomy contains the last speeches of Moses to his people, elaborating on the Commandments and warning of the consequences if the Hebrews failed to honor the Covenant. He blessed his people and then went up to Mount Nebo in Moab, from which place Yahweh showed him the Promised Land. Them Moses, now one hundred and 20 years old, died and was buried somewhere in Moab. The last verses of Deuteronomy affirm that "There has never yet risen in Israel a prophet like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face. . . ." (*See* Judaism, Part II; Hebrew).

Mot

In Phoenecian mythology there was only Chaos (*See* Chaos) in the beginning. Out of Chaos emerged Love and from Love and Chaos came Mot (Matter), the Great Mother of all that has been created in the world.

Mother Earth

See Earth Mother, Great Goddess

Motif

A motif in mythology is a narrative pattern that occurs in a myth or a series of myths that serves to emphasize a given theme

or idea. In mythology and literary studies "motif" is often used synonymously with "archetype" (*See* Archetype) or archetypal pattern. The difference between *archetype* and *motif* is that the former is, strictly speaking, a psychological term describing psychic tendencies that exist in what Jung (*See* Jung, Carl) and others have called a universal psyche or "collective Unconscious." Motifs reflect or give direct and concrete expression to archetypes. The woman falling from the sky is a common motif in earth-diver creation myths. The primeval sea is a common motif in creation myths of various types. Dismemberment is a common motif in certain animistic creation myths. Each of these motifs is a vehicle for the expression of the universal psychic tendency called the "archetype." (*See* Annotated Bibliography; Thompson, Stith).

Muhammad

Muhammad ibn 'Abd Allah, the "Prophet" or "Messenger of God", the man whose experiences led to the formation of the religion we know as Islam, was born in Mecca in c. 570 C.E. to Aminah of the Zuhrah clan. His father, who died before Muhammad's birth, was 'Abd Allah of the Hashim clan. An Arab, Muhammad belonged to the Quraysh tribe. Following tribal tradition, the baby Muhammad spent time being cared for by a wet nurse before he returned to the care of his mother. But when the child was six Aminah died, and the boy became the ward of his paternal grandfather, 'Abdal-Muttalib and later of his uncle Abu Talib. Muhammad always had religious experiences that deeply affected him. Employed by a wealthy widow named Khadijah to lead trading caravans to Syria the young man had opportunity to come into contact with people of backgrounds different from his own. He met Christians and Jews and was influenced by their monotheism, which they traced back to Ibrahim (Abraham). Muhammad favored these religions of these monotheists (*See* Monotheism) over the polytheism (*See* Polytheism) of the old Arabian Mythology. Gradually he came to believe that the old Arabic concept of divinity, *al-ilah* ("the god"), associated with the strange cube in the center of Mecca—the *Ka'bah*—was the one true god, the same god as that of the Jews and Christians (*See* Allah, God). Muhammad married Khadijah and had two children by her—two sons who died early, and four daughters: Zaynab, Ruqayyah, Umm Kulthum, and, most important, Fatima. Fatima would marry her cousin Ali who would be murdered by rivals who denied his claim to be Muhammad's rightful successor. Ali and Fatima would have two sons, al-Hasan and al Husayn (Hussein, al-Husain). Husayn would be killed during an important battle at Karbala (in present day Iraq). The followers of these descendants of Muhammad by the Fatima line are the de facto founders of the *Shi'a* form of Islam for whom Ali and Husayn are revered martyrs.

During the period of his first strivings for religious truth, Muhammad spent many hours in a certain cave on Mount Hira where he believed he was visited by the angel Jibril (Gabriel) through whom the words of the Qur'an, the holy book of Islam, were transferred to him, now, therefore, the "Messenger of God." Muhammad was always supported in his religious quest by his wife, his cousin and later son-in-law Ali, and his friend Abu Bakr.

Muhammad came to believe in the ideal of a community (the *ummah*) under God. Like Jesus, he began to preach, and like Jesus he thought of himself as a reformer for his own people, one who would revitalize and give new life to the old religion. Like most prophets, he was rejected by his own people, and so began a struggle with the pagan population of Mecca. Gradually Muhammad's followers began to emigrate to Medina, a city some 250 miles away, where a large delegation had promised to accept the Prophet's role as messenger of God. Finally, Muhammad and Abu Bakr made their way secretly to Medina. This emigration, known as the *Hijrah,* took place in 622, the first year of the Islamic era (AH 1 or *anno Hegirae,* that is, the Islamic equivalent of the Christian 1 C.E.). Gradually Muhammad and his followers (*Muslims*) gained control of Medina and after a series of wars with the Quraysh tribe took control of Mecca as well. By the time of his death in 632, Muhammad had achieved a remarkable unity—an *ummah*, or community, that essentially united all of the previously warring Arab tribes. Recognized as the true messenger—the final prophet of God, Muhammad had become the de facto founder of a new religion, Islam, as Jesus had several centuries earlier become the founder of Christianity.

Muhammad died in AH 10 (632), According to Sunni Muslims, Muhammad had named Abu Bakr to lead prayers in his absence so the Muslims named Abu Bakr his successor, the first *khalifa* (Caliph, *khalifa <khalafa*, "to succeed"). According to Shi'a (Shi'a'Ali, "Followers of Ali") Muslims, however, Muhammad had chosen his cousin and son-in-law Ali as his successor. The Abu Bakr-Ali controversy continues to this day in the schism in Islam between Sunnis and Shi'a.

Naturally enough, a mythology developed over the centuries around the figure of Muhammad. Some of the stories are canonical—that is derived from the *Qu'ran*. Some are not. In the *hadith*, the accepted traditions of Islam, and in folklore Muhammad became much more than a discontented merchant of Mecca, much more than a religious reformer, he became the world hero to whom God spoke directly and who could break the barriers of space and time in a journey to God's Heaven.

Of Muhammad's birth Thomas Carlyle wrote, "It was as of a birth from darkness into light, Arabia first became alive by means of it . . . a Hero-Prophet was sent down to them with a word they could believe" (Carlyle 101). In keeping with the desire to make Muhammad a version of what Joseph Campbell would later call the "hero with a thousand faces," there are, of course, many apocryphal stories of Muhammad's birth and childhood in spite of canonical Islam's tendency to avoid such stories in connection with the Prophet. A 16th century Turkish miniature depicts Abyssinians attacking the *Ka'bah* only to have their elephants refuse to move on the place of the future Prophet's birth. The same series of miniatures reveals a Muslim annunciation myth in which a host of angels in a dream announces to Amina that she will give birth to a Prophet and instructing her to name the boy Muhammad ("Highly Praised"). Still another miniature shows the angels protecting Amina from the sun during the birth, and another depicts the Prophet performing the first pre-prayer ablutions. It is said that the baby Muhammad with his wet

nurse had such a strong sense of justice that he would suck from only one breast, leaving the other for the wet nurse's son. It is also said that when Muhammad was three he was taken to a mountain top by two men (angels) from the sky who split open his abdomen, took a black grain from it—some say it was the heart—washed it with snow water and filled it with light before restoring the child to wholeness. Then Muhammad was weighed, but with the child on one side of the scale and numerous men on the other, the scale still favored Muhammad. Then a wise man said that even if the whole *ummah* were placed on the scale, Muhammad would outweigh it. Such myths were clearly intended to establish the special heroic quality of the Prophet.

Two canonical Islamic myths, relating directly to Muhammad, are arguably the most important in Islam. These are the story of the receiving of the Qur'an, the greatest miracle of Islam, and the story of the Night Journey. (*See* Islam, Part II; Islamic)

Mulungu

Mulungu is the creator god of the Yao of southern Africa.

Mumbi

Mumbi ("She who Creates") was the wife of the Kikuyu culture hero and first man, Gikuyu (*See* Gikuyu), who was himself created by the creator god, Ngai (*See* Ngai). Together Gikuyu and Mumbi made the Kikuyu.

Mwuetsi

Mwuetsi, a personification of the moon, was the first human created by the god Maori (*See* Maori) in the Wahungwe mythology of Zimbabwe. His first female companion was the Morning Star, Massassi (*See* Massassi)

Myth

A myth is a narrative that in the context of our actual life experience is untrue but that in the context of our religious or dream experience is metaphorically, symbolically, or, for some, literally true. Myths usually tell of supernatural beings, heroic deeds, and seemingly impossible events that take place in a distant past or "myth time." When experienced in rituals, myths can become real again in a metaphorical or literal sense for the participant in the ritual. In that case the myth carries with it some important truth about the human place in the cosmos or, in the case of creation myths, about how the world began. It becomes a sacred narrative. Ultimately, then, myths are the stories that illustrate a given group's sense of ultimate reality, ultimate truth as opposed to scientific truth. Myths resemble dreams in their mixing of the extraordinary and the ordinary and in their power to affect us. Myths may be said to be cultural dreams. (*See* Introduction)

Mythology

Mythology is the study of the nature of myths and mythologies. Mythologies are the collections of myths emanating from particular cultures. Thus, in a course in World Mythology or Mythology, the student would study the nature of myths from various points of view—e.g., religion, anthropology, psychology—and the particular myths of particular peoples—for example, Greek mythology, Norse mythology, and Egyptian Mythology.

Mythos

Mythos as used by the ancient Greeks develop gradually. In Homer's day *mythos* was essentially style and the arrangement of words in literary form. By the time of Plato *mythos* was a metaphorical tale, for Aristotle *mythos* was "plot," the significant arrangement of events for the almost ritual process that was Greek drama.

Na Arean

Na Arean or Naareau or Nareau is the creator god of several Micronesian and Melanesian peoples, including those of the Mariana Islands, the Gilbert islands, and the New Hebrides Islands. He is usually seen as a creator who lived in the Void in the beginning and then created by thought (*See* Part III; Thought-based Creation).

Na Atibu and Nei Teakea

A New Hebrides myth of Melanesia explains that the creator, Naareau (*See* Naareau), decided to make a woman and she became real as Nei Teakea. Then he thought of a man and the man, Na Atibu, the Rock, became real. These were the first parents; they produced Naareau the Younger.

Nagaitcho

Nagaitcho and his companion, Thunder, created the world in the mythology of the Cahto people of California.

Nainema

For the Uitoto of the Columbian jungle, Nainema, "Father with an Illusion" was a creator who created ex nihilo by dream and thought (*See* Part III; Thought-based Creation).

Nammu

A Sumerian fertility goddess, Nammu, was seen by some as the first deity, who gave birth to An (*See* Earth) and Ki (*See* Sky), who, in turn gave birth to the great gods, including Enki. Nammu had the idea of creating humans to help the gods at their work.

Nanabozho

An Algonquian trickster/culture hero, Nanabhoz was a supernatural being who in certain Algonquian mythologies taught the people how to live and protected them from evil forces such as monsters. Known as the Great Hare, Nanabozho could change shapes at will. He was intricately involved in creation. His equivalent in other Algonquian tribes was Glooskap (see above) or Michabo. (*See* Part II; Algonquin, Anishinabe).

Nanahuatzin

According to some ancient Mesoamericans, the present world, or sun, arose at Teotihuacan where Nanahuatzin (Nanantzin, Nanautzin) leapt into a fire and became the sun (*See* Part II; Toltec).

Nantu

See Kumpara

Napi

Napi (Napioa) is a name used by the Blackfoot Native Americans for their creator spirit, also known as Old Man (*See* Old Man).

Native North American Mythologies

The mythologies of Native North America illustrate the religious beliefs and tra-

ditions of many tribes or "nations," many of whom have lived in North America for thousands of years. Since Native American myths have been passed down orally in the absence of a writing tradition, it is difficult to tell how ancient or true to the original these myths are. As different as the mythologies of the various nations are, from each other, it is possible to identify certain themes and character types that pervade the mythologies in general. Certain universal archetypal (*See* Archetype) patterns are as present in Native North America as they are elsewhere in the world. There are myths of creation, many of which are found in this book. There are primal parents such as the Zuni (*See* Part II; Zuni) Sky Father (*See* Sky Father) and Earth Mother (*See* Earth Mother). There are gods and goddesses such as the Great Spirit (*See* Great Spirit), and Spider Woman (*See* Spider Woman). There are many myths of the hero quest, itself containing other universal motifs, including the miraculous conception and birth, the search for the father, and the descent to the underworld. There are many sacred twin myths, as in the creation stories of the Navajos (*See* Part II; Navajo) and the Acoma (*See* Part II; Acoma). Certain themes and characteristics are particularly ubiquitous in the mythology of the North American continent. The most obvious characteristic is the sense of the sacredness of nature. This is not a characteristic that we associate, for instance, with the Abrahamic (*See* Abraham) and other major religions and mythologies. Native American mythology and religion belong to the animistic (*See* Animism) tradition, in which all of nature is enlivened by spirits. Shamans and other spirit medicine men and women help the various peoples communicate with the spirits around them.

Not surprisingly, to a great extent, the emergence of the United States in North America, one of many Abrahamic-dominated nations with dreams of expansion and development and the conquest of nature, has involved direct and often genocidal conflict with the animistic worldview of the cultures we call "Indian."

Supreme deities do not tend to play a central role in Native American mythology. They are present as distant creators in the sky or sometimes as the sun or more commonly as a form of the Great Spirit—the Algonquian Gitchi Manitou (*See* Gitchi Manitou) or the Sioux (*See* Part II; Sioux) Wakan Tanka, for instance—who is an intangible essence more like the Hindu Brahman (*See* Brahman) than the Abrahamic God (*See* God).

A popular Indian figure is the trickster (*See* Trickster), who aids the creator in his work and/or undermines the work by introducing evil and death into the world. He is sometimes a valuable monster-slaying culture hero (*See* Culture Hero), as well, such as is the case with the Algonquian Nanabozho (*See* Nanabozho). More often like Raven (*See* Raven) or the ever popular Coyote (*See* Coyote), they are amoral and possessed of extreme appetites for all kinds of pleasure.

Among many Indian peoples, goddesses or female culture heroes play a more important part in the implementation of creation than do supreme deities. The Cherokee Spider Grandmother, the Acoma sister twins, the Navajo Changing

Woman (*See* Changing Woman) are only a few examples.

The defining myth of most cultures is the creation myth and in Native America there are several types of creation. The Laguna (*See* Part II; Laguna) Thinking Woman thinks the world into being. The Blackfoot Old Man also creates ex nihilo (*See* Ex Nihilo). Among several California tribes the creator works as a craftsman, or deus faber (*See* Deus Faber) measuring out the world like a carpenter. But by far the dominant creation patterns in North America are those of the emergence creation (*See* Part I; Emergence Creation) and earth-diver creation myths (*See* Part I; Earth-Diver Creation).

The emergence creation is particularly central to the lives of the southwestern Indians as it is to those of many Mesoamericans. In the North American southwest the Acoma people, the Hopis and the other Keres and Tewa Pueblo people, as well as the Navajo, all say that they originally emerged in this world from a world or worlds below the earth in a process by which the people evolve from a lower state—for instance, insects—to the human state.

The earth-diver creation myth, clearly related to creation myths of Central Asia (*See* Part II; Central Asian)—those of the Siberians, the Birhor, the Samoyeds, and the Altaic peoples, for example—is found among the Inuit and in the creation mythologies of many of the Native Americans in the east as well as the south. In the earth-diver pattern, an animal is sent into the primordial waters (*See* Primordial Waters) to bring up earth from to form the Earth. Often the process is helped by a female figure who falls from the heavens and becomes Mother Earth (*See* Mother Earth).

Native American possesses some of the richest and least known mythologies of the world.

Ndengei

The original creator god of the pre-Polynesian Melanesian Fiji Islanders was the serpent god Ndengei.

Nemed

In Irish mythology, Nemed (Nemhehd) was the father of the Nemedians, one of the several invading groups that founded Ireland. It was the Nemedians who were said to have developed advanced customs and crafts and cleared land. Nemed was killed in battle with the Fomorians (*See* Fomorians).

Neolithic

"Neolithic" is an anthropological and archeological term that means "New Stone Age" as opposed to the older "Paleolithic" (*See* Paleolithic) meaning "Old Stone Age." "Neolithic" refers to the period of pre-history from about 8500 B.C.E.. to about 3000 B.C.E. depending upon the area of the world being considered. In some areas, Neolithic or pre-Neolithic characteristics appear earlier and in some areas Neolithic life styles persisted into the modern period. The general period is characterized by the development of stone tools, domestic agriculture, developed crafts such as pottery and weaving, and permanent village settlements, the forerunners of cities. The end of the Neolithic coincides with the development of such things as real cities and metal tools,

which marked the emergence of the so-called Bronze Age.

The creation myths of great cultures such as those of Mesopotamia, India, and Crete are all products of the Neolithic.

New Testament

"New testament" in the name given to the Christian as opposed to the Hebrew books of the Bible. It contains the four gospels or biographies of Jesus by the gospelers (evangelists) Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, as well as other writings, most notably the letters (epistles) of the missionary disciple Paul. (*See* Bible).

Ngai

Ngai is the supreme deity and creator of the Kikuyu people of Africa.

Ngoc Hoang

Ngoc Hoang is the Vietnamese version of the Chinese Jade Emperor (*See* Yu). After the separation of Heaven and Earth he created animals out of rough pieces of the sky and earth and humans out of the original chaos.

Ngurunderi

Ngurunderi was the eponymous dreaming (*See* Dreaming, The) ancestor of the Australian Aboriginal Ngurunderi people. He was responsible for the creation of sacred realities in the Aboriginal world.

Nihongi

Also known as the *Nihonshoki*, the *Nihongi* ("Chronicles of Japan") was published in 720 C.E. It contains the history of Japan seen from the mythological perspective of the Shinto, spirit-based religion. Because of the strong influence of Chinese culture in Japan at the time, there is a strong Chinese influence on the myths told in this collection.

Ninhursag

The Sumerian goddess Ninhursag (Belit-ili), was known as "mistress of the foothills" and later "mistress of the gods." Represented by the uterus of a cow, she was a mother goddess of fertility and abundance.

Nishanu

The creator of the North American Arikara people, Nishanu, the great sky chief planted some corn in the heavens and from this corn came Corn Mother (*See* Corn Mother), who descended to Earth to continue the creative process.

Noah

Noah is a flood hero; the main character in the Hebrew version of the universal flood myth found in the biblical Book of Genesis. In flood (*See* Flood) myths around the world a single man, usually with his family, is allowed to survive a deluge sent by the supreme deity to punish the world. In the Sumerian-Babylonian flood myth, for example, the gods chose Ziasudra/Utnapishtim (*See* Utnapishtim) as the flood hero. In the Hebrew myth, Yahweh chooses Noah and his family. Noah will become the patriarch of post flood generations. (*See* Canaanites, Part III; Flood in Creation Myths)

Norse Mythology

Norse mythology is a term used to differentiate it from the larger body of

Germanic mythology of which it is a part. The Norse people are often called Vikings. They were Swedes, Danes, and Norwegians and primarily Icelanders who, between 780 and 1070, undertook wide-scale raids and in many case colonization in what was, in effect, a second Migration period for Germanic peoples. Vikings took much of the British Isles, found their way to Italy, Spain, and Southern France, and to Kiev, Constantinople, and Baghdad in the east and probably to pre-Columbian North America in the west. Most important, they colonized Iceland, where, in a somewhat isolated situation, their mythology developed and flourished well after most of Europe had become Christian. In fact, it was not until the year 1000 that the Icelandic Assembly voted to give up the old religion in favor of Christianity, and the old gods remained supreme in Sweden for longer than that. The 11th century German historian Adam of Bremen and many others reported eye-witness accounts of sacrifices to the Norse High God, Odin at the great Temple in Uppsala as late as 1070.

The Icelandic historian Snorri Sturluson (1179–1241) and the Danish historian Saxo Grammaticus (1150–1216), two of our most important redactors of Norse mythology, wanted to preserve knowledge of an ancient culture that, although relatively recent, was no longer a threat to contemporary Christian beliefs. Saxo wrote in Latin but with real knowledge of the Norse sagas. His *Gesta Danorum* ("History of the Danes") corroborates much of the more extensive work of Snorri.

It is on Snorri that we depend most for our knowledge of Germanic or Norse mythology. His work was based on several sources. These included the *Codex Regius*, an ancient manuscript containing a collection of probably pre-Christian mythical poems of the Viking period called *Saemund's Edda* after one Saemund Siugfusson, to whom they are traditionally attributed. These poems were not written down, however, until the late 13th century. A few other mythological poems were discovered soon after the *Codex Regius* and the whole collection is known more commonly as the *Elder Edda* or simply the *Poetic Edda* (*See* Eddas), within which the most famous poems and the ones most used by Snorri are *Voluspa* (the "Prophecy of the Seeress"), containing the great story of the beginning and end of the world; *Grimnismal,* in which the high god Odin speaks in the disguise as Grimnir (the "Hooded One"); and *Havamal,* in which is told the story of the self-hanging of Odin. Other poetic sources for Snorri and other later mythologists and historians are the highly alliterative skaldic poems (*skalds* were bards, the *filidh* of the North), known in literary circles for their extensive use of *kennings* ("namings"), compound metaphorical substitutions for the names of things (for example, "whale-road" for the sea or "Freya's tears" for gold). The skaldic form was common in Old English poetry as well as in the Old Norse and methods of skaldic and Eddic poetry. Snorri himself wrote skaldic poetry, as in *Hattatal*, a eulogy for two noblemen, and sagas based on the Icelandic sagas (the *Fornaldar Sogur*). Snorri's *Heimskringla,* compiled from poems and sagas, is a history of Norwegian kings from mythical time until 1177 and

contains the *Ynglingasaga,* an important source for Norse mythology, tracing the pre-Norwegian Swedish kings and their mythological ancestors back to the god Odin.

By far, Snorri's most important work, however, is his *Edda*, or *Prose Edda*, as it is called to differentiate it from the *Poetic Edda*. Written in about 1220, it was intended to be a handbook and guide to the old mythology for poets and scholars. The *Prose Edda* begins with an introduction called the *Gylfaginning* (the "Deluding of Gylfi"), in which a fictional Swedish king, Gylfi, disguised as a beggar called Gangleri, visits Asgard, the home of the gods, and questions the also disguised Odin (Wotan in Germany) and two other mysterious figures about the ancient gods and mythological history. The second section of the *Prose Edda* is *Skaldskaparmal* ("Poetic Diction"), which supplies rules for traditional poetry and many myths as well. The final section is *Hattatal*.

More than any other European or Indo European mythology, Germanic mythology of the Norse tradition is in tune with the ancient Indian sense of life—including that of the gods—as being part of a larger process of creation, preservation, and destruction. For many this is an essentially pessimistic mythology, reflecting the long dark days of the seemingly endless Northern winters. Others might see it in the Indian way as the natural history of birth, death, and rebirth in the cosmic context.

The mythological universe of the Norsemen as depicted by the *Poetic Edda* and Snorri's *Edda* was made up of three levels divided by space. The top level was Asgard, where the Aesir, the race of warrior gods, led by Odin and Thor, lived. Here was the great hall Valhalla where slain warriors fought, were killed heroically again, but revived to feast on pork and mead. It was the Valkyries, Odin's maids, who summoned the warriors to Valhalla and who served them there. The warriors would fight in the great battle at the end of time. On this top level also lived the Vanir, the fertility gods who played the role of antagonists to the Aesir in one of the Norse versions of the Indo-European war in Heaven. Eventually the Aesir and the Vanir would unite into one pantheon. Light Elves also lived on the top level of the universe, in Alfheim, and a place called Gimli housed the righteous dead.

Midgard, the world of humans, was the middle level of the universe. This was a world surrounded by a vast ocean containing the World Serpent Jormungand who, according to Snorri, bit his own tail, thus forming a firm belt to hold the world together. The Giants; the ultimate foes of the Aesir, lived either across the ocean or in another part of Midgard, a place called Jotunheim, protected by the fortress of the Outer World, Utgard. Dwarfs and Dark Elves lived in Nidavellir ("Dark Home") and Svartalfheim in the north.

The lowest level of the universe contained Niflheim, the home of the wicked dead—a place of utter darkness with a citadel called Hel ruled over by a monstrous queen also named Hel, as the Greek Hades was a place ruled over by a god of the same name.

The axis of all three worlds was the great World Tree Yggdrasill (*See* Axis Mundi)—the cosmic ash with roots

leading to Hel and to the worlds of humans and the Frost Giants. At the foot of the tree were various springs and/or wells, including Urd's Well, that of the Norns, and the well of Mimir ("Wisdom").

Using primarily the late 10th-century eddaic poem, the *Voluspa,* Snorri Sturluson relates the creation myth (*See* Part II; Norse). Later he tells us that there were 12 primary gods and 13 goddesses under Odin, the "All Father" and his consort Frigg. Originally there had been two races of gods: warrior gods led by Odin and Thor called the Aesir and fertility gods called the Vanir, the most famous of whom were Njord, Freyr, and the goddess Freya. The Vanir, as deities of the fertile earth, were closer to humans than the sky gods of Asgard. Their concern was not social order or morality but the productivity of Earth and its inhabitants. Goddesses and sexuality—even orgies—were important to ancient worshippers of the Vanir. The Aesir were more to be feared. They were war gods and gods of social order, morality, and magic. The war between these two races of gods was as inevitable as other Indo European wars between deities—for example, the Irish wars between the Tuatha and the Firbolg and the Tuatha and the Fomorians—and may be a distant metaphor for ancient clashes between pre-Indo European peoples and their Indo European warrior invaders. Later, more devastating wars were those between the giants and the gods at Ragnarok, the end of the world. Again, the Armageddon-like battles are fought in other Indo European mythologies, as, for example, between the demons and gods of India, reflected in the human battle of the *Mahabharata,* and between the Titans and Olympians in Ancient Greece.

The eventual truce between the Aesir and Vanir resulted in a valuable combination for gods and humans based on the attributes of both races. Specifically, it gave rise to the powers of the imagination, or inspiration, something akin to the Vedic word power of ancient India, the poetic powers of the Celtic Amairgen and Taliesen or the or the necessary ecstatic Dionysian and orderly Apollonian combination in the art of ancient Greece and perhaps all art.

A strange myth explains the powers that were born of the joining of Aesir and Vanir. To confirm their truce, the Aesir and Vanir spat into a pot and out of the pot sprang Kvasir, the wisest of beings, who could answer any question. Soon Kvasir was made to play the role of sacrificial (*See* Sacrifice) victim out of which new life would come. He was killed by two dwarfs, who mixed his blood with honey in two cauldrons. Kvas denotes an alcoholic beverage and, in keeping with the process of fermentation, the resulting liquid became a kind of soma-like mead, the drinking of which brought the magical fermentation we know as poetic imagination. But the mead was stolen by giants, as the Vedic *soma* had been stolen. In both ancient Indian and Norse myths the precious drink is recovered by the gods—in the Norse case by Odin—but some finds its way to human beings, giving them the godly power of imagination, or poetry.

The *Ynglinga Saga* tells another story of the truce between Vanir and Aesir. As was the Norse custom, the Vanir sent two hostages to the Aesir as a guarantee of

peace. These were the gods Njord and Freyr. The Aesir sent the handsome Honir and the wise Mimir to the Vanir. Feeling that they had the worst of the exchange, the Vanir cut off Mimir's head and returned it to the Aesir, but Odin used his magic spells to make the head talk and to reveal many important secrets. Decapitation and talking heads figure also in Celtic mythology, as, for instance, in the case of the Welsh Bran, whose head went on talking long after his death.

Clearly the High God of the Norse world was Odin (Germanic Wodan, Wotan, Woden). Odin is the Allfather, but not a loving one. From his place in the gods' home Asgard, where he lives with his wife Frigg, he can see all there is to see in all the worlds of the universe. In his Zeus-like willingness to stir up trouble among those below him he is closer to the trickster Loki than to his much-respected son Thor. In fact, shamanic qualities that associate him with the dead and with a magical knowledge of runes make him a trickster himself, as in a myth of his mysterious hanging on the World Tree. Above all Odin is a fierce god of battle.

The god Tyr, so important as the German Tiw (Tiwaz), part of the Wodan-Tiw-Thunr tripartite arrangement, plays a relatively minor role in the north. He is a war god who also protects judicial assemblies and is concerned with oaths, particularly those associated with the Germanic tradition of trial by ordeal. One of the few existing myths of Tyr, known as the Binding of Fenrir, tells of a strange trial by ordeal of sorts in which the trickster Loki, the vicious wolf Fenrir, and Tyr play major roles. In this myth, Tyr, like the Irish Nuada in his battle with the Firbolg, sacrifices a hand. northern version of the German Thunr. Thor is the god of sky and thunder, preserver of law and order in Midgard. As the son of the sky god Odin and the Earth Goddess Fyorgyn (Earth), he is also a god of fertility. Thor is dependable where Odin is unpredictable. Above all, he is steadfast in the struggle of the gods against the Giants. He retains the Herculean characteristics the Romans had recognized in Thunr. Huge in size, with red beard and eyes, he has enormous appetites, and not much wit. He carries a great hammer and wears iron gloves and a girdle of power. Thor's wife is the fertility goddess Sif, whose beautiful wheat-like hair was once shaved off—that is, stolen—by Loki. His daughter is Thrud, whose name, appropriately, means "Might."

Of particular significance is Thor's hammer, Mjollnir. Flung through the sky it is a deadly weapon and is, of course, representative of lightning and thunder. Hammers representing Thor's fertile phallic power were traditionally placed in the laps of brides in Scandinavia. Such hammers were also used to hallow the newly born, perhaps to ensure fertile lives. Stories of Thor such as one known as Thor's Duel with Hrungnir," are among the most popular in Germanic mythology. In that myth Thor is the Indo European giant-monster killer, the representative of good against evil, light against darkness:

The most important of the Norse fertility gods—the Vanir—belong to the family of Njord. Njord's children, Freyr and Freya form fertility a triad with their father. Freyr, the great god who regulates the sun, the rain, the produce of the land, and human fertility, is depicted, logically,

with a gigantic phallus. The feminine aspect of the fertility triad, Freya, is a goddess of both war and love, and is known for her lascivious ways, even giving sexual favors to four dwarfs in return for the Necklace of the Brisings.

The highest ranking of the Norse goddesses is Frigg, the wife of Odin. Born of Fjorgyn, the Earth Goddess. Frigg knows human destiny and is the goddess of childbirth.

Central to many of the Norse myths is Loki (*See* Norse Mythology), the shapeshifting trickster offspring of the Giants, who is at once charming, mischievous, and evil. Nowhere is Loki's role more important than in the myth of the beautiful god Balder, son of Odin and Frigg.

The Balder (Baldr) myth comes down to us by way of the *Prose Edda* of Snorri Sturluson and the work of Saxo Grammaticus When Balder the Beautiful, son of the Germanic Norse high god Odin had dreams foreshadowing his destruction, the gods intervened to save him. His mother, Frigg, convinced everything on Earth to swear not to harm her son. Only one small plant, the mistletoe, was overlooked. Believing Balder was now immune to any threat, the gods enjoyed throwing things at him for fun. But the trickster Loki, in female disguise, learned from Frigg of the neglected mistletoe. He plucked it out of the earth and convinced the blind god Hod (Hodr) to throw the plant at his brother Balder. Loki guided the god's hand, and the mistletoe struck its victim in the heart, causing instant death.

The gods were bitterly sad at the loss of so wonderful a companion, and Odin realized that Balder's death foreshadowed the death of all the gods. Frigg called on a volunteer to travel to Hel to bring her son back. Another of her sons, Hermod, agreed to go. He rode to Hel, found Balder seated in a place of honor, and learned that the god could return to Earth only if all things, living and dead, would weep for him. When Odin learned the news of his son, he called on all things to weep. And all things did weep—all but a giantess, the disguised Loki, in fact, who snarled, "Let Hel keep her own." And so Balder was to remain in the land of the dead. With the death of Balder, Ragnarok, the end of the world, was inevitable.

But it was believed that the earth would rise from the deeps again one day, green and blossoming, and that a new sun would arise, and a number of gods would return to the ancient ruins of Asgard, led now by Balder.

Certain similarities exist between the myths of King Arthur and those of the Norse Balder, suggesting a possible single source for both stories. As Arthur was slain by his son or nephew, Balder was killed by his brother, and as the wounded Arthur was cared for by women, Balder was sometimes associated with the supernatural warrior-women called the Valkyries. Like Arthur, he partook of magical food. Furthermore, his death, like Arthur's, with its promise of return, can be tied to the idea of fertility.

Scholars have long sought Balder's origins in the fertility gods of the Middle East—gods such as Attis, Baal, Adonis, and Osiris, who died and returned with the plants of spring. Balder's particular plant, the mistletoe—the one Snorri tells us killed him—attaches itself to the oak, a sacred tree not only to the Celts

but to Indo-Europeans in general. Later northern Christians would see in Balder a prophecy of the new Christian god who, after his return from the dead, as we learn from the Anglo-Saxon *Dream of the Rood*—"surrounded by the mighty host of souls He had freed from the torments of Hell—returned to the City of God crowned with victory and glory." The Balder myth may well have been influenced by the Christian tradition, but it seems to have existed in some form that pre-dated that influence.

With the death of Balder, Ragnarok, the end of the world (literally "End of the Gods"), was inevitable. Ragnarok is the apocalypse. Snorri describes the terrible events, perhaps appropriate to the cold, dark Germanic north, in the *Prose Edda*, basing his story on that of the solemn second part of the *Voluspa* in the older *Poetic Edda.* According to the myth, the high god Odin called up a seeress from the dead who told him how the world began and how it would end. The beginning of the end would be wars in Midgard, the land of humans. Relatives would fight each other, social order would break down. Fathers would kill their sons, incest would become common. Then would come a three year winter, *Fimvulvetr*, recalling another Indo European apocalyptic winter marking the end of the world in Iranian mythology. Next the wolf, Skoll, will swallow the sun and his brother Hati will destroy the moon. The terrible wolf Fenrir and the punished trickster Loki will break their bonds and run free; earthquakes will destroy the earth. Gullinkambi, the golden cock of Asgard, will arouse Odin and his companions. Yggdrasill will tremble. The seas will overlap their shores with a violent tide as Jormungand, the great Serpent, makes his way to shore. Loki will captain the ship of the dead, Naglfar, from Hel, and Hrim will lead a host of giants. Fenrir's wide jaws will tear Asgard and Midgard, and Jormungand will spit out venom and poison in every corner of creation. Surt will lead the fire demons of Muspell across Bifrost the Rainbow Bridge, and it will shatter and fall beneath them; fire will envelop them, and Surt's sword will take the place of the sun. The enemies of the gods will gather on the plain of Vigrid. Called by Heimdall's mighty Gjallarhorn, the gods will gather and will march, eight hundred strong, through Valhalla's five hundred and forty doors. Resplendent in his golden helmet and shining mail, gripping his great sword, Gungnir grimly, Odin will challenge Fenrir, and Thor beside him will look to settle his old score with Jormungand. Freyr will struggle with Surt and, after a great struggle, will fall. Tyr and Garm the Hound will kill each other, as will Loki and Heimdall. Thor will defeat Jormungand in the end, but will die himself from the serpent's poison. Fenrir will swallow Odin at the last, but his victory will be cut short by Vidar, who will avenge his father and vanquish the wolf by ripping its jaw apart. Then Surt will send his fire through the three levels and nine worlds of creation, and all will die: men and gods, dwarfs and elves, birds and beasts.

But out of Ragnarok, as out of the endings of the ancient Indian eras, a new world will be born. The earth will rise from the deeps again one day, green and blossoming, and crops will flourish again. A new sun will take the place of

the old and some gods will return to the ruined Asgard, led now by Balder. Lif and Lifthrasir will survive to renew the race of humans; they will have hidden themselves securely in Yggdrasill's embrace, where Surt's fire will not have scorched them; they will have survived on morning dew, and will have kept watch through the branches above them for the new sun. And thus, through its death, the world will be born again.(*See* Part II; Norse).

Nostu-Nōpantu

In the mythology of the Garo people of India the high god sends a female spirit, Nostu-Nōpantu, to do the creating. She sends various animals to the depths of the primordial waters to find necessary sand with which to begin creation.

Nuada

Nuada was king of the Tuatha de Danann (*See* Tuatha de Danaan), the ancient Celtic gods, when they arrived in Ireland. Nuada lost his hand in a Battle against the Firbolg (*See* Firbolg) and gave up his throne. He became known as "Nuada of the Silver Hand" when the medicine god Dian Cecht made him a silver replacement. Later, Nuada died in a battle with the Fomorians (*See* Fomorians). (*See* Part II; Irish)

Nügua

Nügua (Nuwa, Nu-kua) was a Great Mother goddess of Chinese mythology. The sister-wife of the August emperor-god Fuxi (*See* Fuxi), she was sometimes depicted as a serpent, and was believed to be able to change shapes at will. She created the first humans out of yellow soil and mud, the yellow soil making aristocrats, the mud the lower classes.

Nyambe

According to the Malozi of Zambia, the god Nyambe was at first in the world alone. He created Earth and lived there with his wife, Nasilele. He made the rivers, plains, animals, and the first people (*See* Kamunu).

Nyame

Nyame (Nzame) or is a common West African name for the supreme creator god (*See* Nyambe, Part II; Ashanti, Fang, Malazoi, Yoruba,).

Obassi Nsi and Obassi Osaw

The Ekoi people of Nigeria say that there were two gods, Obassi Osaw and Obassi Nsi, who created everything together. Eventually Obassi Osaw decided to live in the sky and deal with heavenly creations while Obassi Nsi became attached to Earth and earthly matters—including death.

Obatala

In the Yoruba creation story, Obatala (Orishanla) was sent by the high creator Olurun (*See* Olurum) to the chaos below Heaven to create land.

Odin

The "Allfather" high god of Norse mythology (*See* Norse Mythology), Odin was a king with magical—shamanic (*See* Shaman) powers. The *Eddas* (*See* Eddas) tell how Odin sacrificed one of his eyes

for a drink of the magical liquid of Mimir's well. Odin's remaining eye had the power to paralyze. Odin was also god of battle and of the dead. He entertained fallen warriors at Valhalla (Vaholl = "Hall of the Slain"), and he inspired followers called the *berserkir*—those who "go berserk" in battle.

Ogboinba

The Ijaw of the Niger River Delta in Nigeria have an epic tale of a heroine Ogboinba, who oversteps her proper boundaries in an attempt to force the creator—Woyengi—to overcome her barrenness by recreating her.

Ohrmazd

See Ahura Mazda

Old Man

Old Man is a common translation for the creator god or Great Spirit on Native North Americans, especially Algonquian speaking peoples. The term is used, for instance, for the creator in the mythologies of the Wyot, Thompson, Pomo, Okanagan, Blood, and Blackfoot tribes (*See* Part II; Blackfoot, Blood, Okanagan, Pomo, Thompson, Wyot). Sometimes the trickster creator Raven (*See* Raven) is called Old Man, as in the case of the Haida creation (*See* Part II; Haida). The same is true of the trickster creator Coyote, as in the case of the Crow creation (*See* Napi, Part II; Crow).

Old Man in the Heavens

The Wyot people of Northern California say that a creator, Old Man in the Heavens created people, but they turned out to be all furry, necessitating another attempt

Old One

Old One is a common translation of the name of the creator is mythologies of the American Northwest, as, for example, in the myths of the Thompson and Okanagan mythologies.

Old Testament

See Bible, Torah

Older Brother and Younger Brother

In the creation myth of the Zuni of the southwestern United States, Older (Elder) Brother and Younger Brother are sons of the father creator. They lead the people in the emergence (*See* Emergence) from the lower world to this world.

Olurun

Olurun (Olodumare) is the supreme creator in a myth of the African Yoruba people. Olurun sent his assistant, Obatala (*See* Obatala) to create some land in the chaos below the heavens. Olurun breathed life into human creatures created by Obatala.

Olympians

The pantheon of Greek mythology in classical times was made up of a family known as the Olympians, because their court was said to be on Mount Olympus, a mountain in Thessaly. These gods were the descendants of the Titans Kronos and Rhea (*See* Kronos and Rhea), Sky and Earth. At any given time there were supposedly 12 Olympians, but occasionally

there were disagreements as to which gods actually made up the number. In fact, over the years, the Olympians can be said to have numbered 14. The questionable additions were the late comer Dionysos, the sometimes omitted Hestia and Hades. For the most part, the Olympians were sky gods, *ouranioi*; gods of the heavens, although they moved easily between the sky and the world of humans. Often they acted very much like humans, sharing their appetites and sometimes even their beds. The Olympian family was a reflection of the mores and privileges associated with aristocratic families such as might have been found at places like Athens, Mycenae or Thebes. From time to time the family gathered for counsel of entertainment around the high table of Zeus on Olympus, but they had their own favorite homes around Greece. In a soap opera they could be characterized as a rich and powerful family consisting of a philandering patriarch, many servants—some kidnapped—a jealous wife, and several highly spoiled sons and daughters who, like their parents, affected the lives of lesser beings and demanded tribute and adulation.

Kronos and Rhea, Sky and Earth, who produced three sons and three daughters. These were the king god Zeus famous for his thunderbolt, Poseidon Lord of the sea, Hera the consort of Zeus, Hades Lord of the underworld, the generally earth-based sister Demeter, and the infrequently discussed Hestia, goddess of the hearth and home. Zeus and Hera produced Hephaistos the smith god and Ares the god of war. Through a relationship with Leto Zeus fathered the oracular and artistic Apollo and the eternally virginal huntress Artemis. A relationship with Metis resulted in the warlike but wise and also virginal Athene. With Maia Zeus fathered the messenger and sometimes trickster god Hermes, and it was said by some that the goddess of love Aphrodite was born of the "foam" resulting from the castrated genitals Kronos. Other sources credit Aphrodite to a relationship between Zeus and Dione. As for the last of the Olympians, the mysterious Dionysos, he was born of a liaison between Zeus and poor Semele, although eventually he was carried in gestation in his father's thigh. (*See* Greek Mythology, Part II; Greek).

Omam

The creator of the Yanomami people in South America, Omam had intercourse with a fish woman he caught in a river and people were the result

Ometeotl (Ometecuhtli and Omecihuatl)

Ometeotl is an spelling that connotes both aspects of Ometecuhtli, the self-created first god in the Aztec creation myth. Ometeotl ("Two God") existed in two aspects, as the male, Ometecuhtli, and the female, Omecihuatl (Tonacatecuhtli and Tonacacihuatl). By way of its two genders, this the deity parented the "Four Tezcatlipocas": blue Huitzilopochtli, white Quetzalcoatl, black Tezcatlipoca, and red Xipe-Totec. (*See* Part II; Aztec).

One Who Walks All Over the Sky

In the creation myth of the Alaskan Tsimshian, One Who Walks All Over the Sky is a name for the sun, a son of the great sky chief.

Ontological Myths

An ontological myth is one that explores the nature of existence, of ultimate reality. All religious stories, or myths, are ontological in that they are archetypal records of ontological assumptions. This is a topic that particularly concerns the religious scholar Mircea Eliade (*See* Eliade, Mircea), especially in connection with the Eternal Return (*See* Eternal Return, The).

Ophion

Ophion was the serpent god who mated with Eurynome (*See* Eurynome), the great goddess of the Pelasgian version of a creation myth of ancient Greece.

Origin Myths

Origin myths are related to creation myths, but whereas creation myths tell how the *world* came into being, origin myths tell how things *in* the created world came into being. Sometimes as simple as how the dog got its fur or as complex as how particular elements of culture emerged, these myths often tell of the work of a culture hero as opposed to the work of the primary creator. In short, creation myths usually include origin myth aspects. (For example, *See* Part II; Central Asian).

Orphism

Orphism, which came into its own in the Hellenistic period but which we know now existed as early as the 6th century B.C.E., was a movement that assimilated elements of the Olympian religion with those of Eleusis and Dionysos. Finally it was not a terribly difficult step from these mystery religions to the dying god myth that came to Greece in the fist century C.E. with Paul and other Christian missionaries from the Middle East. By the time Paul and his followers made their way to the Greek colonies in Asia Minor, they found a population more than ready for the new religion. In a passage from the New Testament Acts of the Apostles (14:8–18) we are told, for instance, that when at Lystra Paul cured a man who had been "lame from birth," the people cried out that "The gods have come down to us in human form!" They called one of Paul's companions Zeus and Paul himself "they called Hermes, because he was the spokesman"—Hermes traditionally being the messenger of the gods. The priest of Zeus brought animals to be sacrificed, and even when Paul denied that he and his assistants were gods and attempted to preach their new religion of resurrection, "they barely managed to prevent the crowd from offering sacrifice to them."(*See* Christianity, Greek Mythology).

Osiris

Osiris was perhaps the most important god of ancient Egypt in that, with his sister-wife Isis, he was central to the Egyptian concept of re-creation—death and regeneration, existing in the real world by the annual flooding and receding of the Nile, leaving a renewed land and in the political world by the death of the old pharaoh as Osiris and his rebirth as Osiris's son, Horus. All of this is represented in the myth in which the hero-god-king Osiris is murdered by his brother Seth and revived by Isis to become king of the Underworld and god of grain and father of Horus (*See* Horus).

Otsirvani

Otsirvani was a Siberian creator, who was assisted by Chagan-Shukuty (*See* Chagan-Shukuty).

Ouranos

Ouranos (Uranos, Uranus) was the first of the Greek supreme father gods. He was a personification of the heavens—the Sky. Ouranos mated with the first Mother, the Earth Goddess, Gaia. Their offspring were the Titans and other terrifying creatures. Ouranos hated his children and forced them back into Gaia until she was about to burst. So Gaia, in great pain, gave her son Kronos (*See* Kronos and Rhea) a sickle with which to castrate his father and, thus, to separate Sky from Earth, allowing for more creation.

Pachacamac

In some versions of Inca mythology Pachacamac was one of the brothers of the Inca founder Manco Capac, "the Inca" (*See* Inca). In other pre-Incan stories he was the supreme creator deity and a god of prophecy. Pachacamac created the first people.—a man and a woman—out of clay.

Pagan and Primitive

The term "pagan" has been used and misused in many ways by various traditions and cultures. Traditionally, the term has referred negatively to people and religions outside of the framework of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Jews, Christians and Muslims maintain belief in the same god, known by various names, such as Yahweh, God, or Allah and people who do not believe in that god they often call "pagans." The term is often used almost synonymously with the term "primitive." Paganism traditionally is said to be the approach to religion taken by primitive people—especially animistic (*See* Animism) and polytheistic (*See* Polytheism) people who have many gods and/or who find spirits everywhere and in everything. More recently the negative view of pagans and primitives has given way to something more positive. As the world grows smaller in terms of cross-cultural understanding people have understood that certain religions and mythologies once referred to negatively as pagan, must now be considered higher religions. Practitioners of Hinduism, Buddhism, Shinto, and Taoism, for instance, are now rarely called pagans. And the same applies to animistic cultures such as many of those in Africa and Native North America, which are now looked upon by many as anything but primitive given what is seen as their deep understanding of and relationship with nature. Furthermore, even religions and mythologies once considered dead—those, for instance, of ancient Greece and Egypt—have found a new place in the belief and worship of modern self-described pagans who use that word positively to refer to themselves as people who have been able to transcend what they see as repressive religion to a much freer and truly religious and anything but primitive relationship with the world around us.

Pahlavi Texts

The Pahlavi Texts are made up of the Pahlavi (Middle Iranian language) translations of the ancient Zoroastrian sacred text, the *Avesta* (*See* Avesta). The Pahlavi Texts originate in about 250 C.E. (*See* Zoroastrianism, Part II; Zoroastrian)

Pajana

The creator god of the Siberian-Tartars, Pajana's work was undermined by the devil-trickster Erlik (*See* Erlik)

Paleolithic

"Paleolithic" is an anthropological and archeological term meaning "Old Stone Age" and, depending on the area under discussion, refers to the pre-historical period that precedes the Neolithic (*See* Neolithic). It is a period that begins with the emergence of a tool making humanoid millions of years ago and is marked by hunting and gathering and eventually by primitive stone tools and by about 30,000 B.C.E. by sophisticated cave paintings and figurines and the development of what was probably religion, including, presumably, creation stories. Such myths may perhaps be imagined in such depictions as the one in the great Chauvet cave in Southern France in which a wonderful variety of animals seem to emerge from a female figure, who seems to be squatting for childbirth. Is she a very early version of the creative Earth Mother (*See* Earth Mother)? The birth process would have been a logical place to look for metaphors to express the larger creation.

Pandora

When the Titan Prometheus stole fire and gave it to humans to make their lives easier, the Greek high god Zeus became furious and took revenge against both Prometheus and humankind. He first asked the smith god Hephaistos, from whose forge the fire had been taken, to create a woman out of clay. Then following their father's instructions, Athena gave the woman life, Aphrodite gave her beauty, and the trickster Hermes gave her cunning. So it was that the gods named her Pandora ("All-gifted") and presented her Epimetheus, the brother of Prometheus. Epimetheus accepted the gift in spite of Prometheus' warning that any gifts from the Olympians (*See* Olympians) could lead to disaster. Hesiod (*See* Hesiod) describes the gods giving Pandora a box to take with her and her husband into the world of humans. He tells how, overcome by curiosity, Pandora opened the box, releasing all of the evils that from then on plagued humanity. Only Hope remained in the box.

Pandora and Epimetheus were the parents of Pyrrha, who, with her husband Deucalion, survived the great flood that Zeus sent to destroy humankind. In many ways, then, she is the Eve of Greek mythology (*See* Adam and Eve).

Pangu

In Chinese creation mythology, Pangu, who, some say, was born of a cosmic egg is the animistic source of the world and in many version the creator. He is known as the First Man or First Born (*See* Animism, Cosmic Egg, Part II; Chinese)

Papan and Ma-Papan

Papan and Ma-Papan are the brother creators of the Sumu people of Nicaragua in Central America.

Paradise

Paradise is sometimes used interchangeably with Heaven (*See* Heaven) when an ideal, pain free, pleasure-filled resting place for humans place after death is meant. More often, Paradise is a place on Earth—the Garden of Eden, for instance—that existed before humans

fell from grace. The Elysian Fields is a paradise for dead Greek heroes, as is Valhalla for the Norse. The earliest known paradise story is that of the Sumerians. In Sumerian cuneiform tablets a place called Dilmun is described. It is a place where sickness, violence, and aging are absent. But Dilmun appears to have been reserved as a home for the gods rather than for humans. According to the story, the gods Utu and Enki (*See* Enki) provided Dilmun with water and it became a beautiful garden. Less physical, more philosophical paradises such as the Japanese Pure Land of Pure Land Buddhism exist, but most often paradises are settings for a golden age at the beginning of creation rather than settings for an afterlife. Golden age paradises such as that of the Hindu age or *yuga* known as the *krtayuga,* or Hesiod's age when humans resembled gods, are marked by qualities that humans all long for: opulence, fertility, pleasure, freedom, peace, and full communication among all the species. Paradises can be corrupted by invading forces such as Satan in the Genesis myth. The theme of the spoiling of Paradise exists in African, Native North American and other mythologies as well. The cause of the movement from the golden age of paradise to the world as we know it is often the result of a trickster's (*See* Trickster) act or the existence of human pride or greed. (*See* Adam and Eve, Fall from Grace, Part II; Hebrew, Greek, Maidu, Norse, Sumerian, Swahili)

Partholon

Partholon and his people were the second invaders or settlers in the myth of Irish creation. It was Partholon who is said to have developed social customs and traditions and who began clearing land.

Parvati

Parvati is a form taken by Devi (*See* Devi), the Great Goddess of the Hindus in Indian mythology. She is "Daughter of the Mountain" and Shiva's wife. Parvati is depicted as a beautiful woman who sits in an embrace with her husband, signifying her position as his *shakti* (*See* Shakti), his energizing power. Parvati is the mother of the elephant-headed god, Ganesha.

Patriarchal

Patriarchal societies are those ruled by males—patriarchs. In patriarchal societies descent and ownership are passed through the male line. Most Indo European (*See* Indo European) societies are patriarchal. A society can be patriarchal and matrilineal, as in the case of certain Native American tribes in which descent and ownership are passed through the female line but political and religious power belongs to men.

Patrilineal

"Patrilineal" as opposed to "matrilineal" societies are those in which descent and ownership are passed through the male rather than the female line. Almost all patrilineal societies are also patriarchal (*See* Patriarchal).

Pedn and Manoid

Pedn and Manoid were the divine couple of the pantheon of the South Asian Negritos. The couple came down to the newly created Earth. They had human children, the first of whom emerged from fruit plucked from a tree.

Pelasgians

The pre-Greek Pelasgians arrived in Greece long before the originators of the Olympian religion. Their creation myth is dominated by a female creator and a Cosmic Egg (*See* Eurynome).

Pemba

See Faro and Pemba

Perkunas

Perkunas is one of many names of the creator god of the Baltic peoples.

Philistines

The Philistines were non-Semitic rivals of the ancient Hebrew-Israelites in Canaan in the second millennium B.C.E.

Phoenicians

"Phoenician" is a term used by some to mean "Canaanite" and by others to differentiate Iron Age from Bronze Age Canaanites. The Phoenicians, who perhaps originated further west in the Mediterranean world, were seafarers who settled in the coastal area that is modern Lebanon. They are credited with having invented the alphabet in about 1500 B.C.E., not long before the Mycenaeans in Greece overpowered the old Minoan civilization of Crete. The Phoenicians established multiple colonies and trade connections in the Mediterranean world. Much of what we think of as Canaanite mythology is essentially Phoenician. An important Phoenician theme was that of the Dying God, a theme prevalent among agricultural cultures of the larger Middle East—for example, Adonis, Osiris, and Jesus (*See* Adonis, Osiris, Jesus).

Po'ele and Kumulipo

A Hawaiian creation story tells us that in the beginning there was only the darkness. Out of the darkness were born the night and the male, Kumulipo, the essence of darkness, and the female Po'ele, darkness itself.

Poimandres

In Gnostic mythology, Hermes Trismegistus (*See* Hermes Trismegistus) tells how Poimandres, the Shepherd, the Nous (Mind) of the Absolute Power, taught him the nature of reality and God.

Polynesia

Polynesians are an ethnic group that dominates several of the Western Pacific islands known collectively as the Oceanic Islands, a wide-spread island group that also includes Micronesia and Melanesia (*See* Micronesia, Melanesia). Polynesian mythology is expressed in related but individual ways among the Maori of New Zealand, and the indigenous peoples of the Hawaiian Islands, Tahiti, Samoa and other smaller islands. Legend has it that the Maori people came to New Zealand in canoes. Like most Oceanic mythologies, Polynesian mythology is animistic (*See* Animism), that is full of spirits. A sense of duality is common, represented by opposites such as good and evil, Sky and Earth, Night and Day, Light and Dark (*See* Part II; Polynesian).

Polytheism

Polytheism is the belief system that acknowledges the existence of more than one god—usually many gods (*See* Monalatry, Monism, Monotheism)

Popol Vuh

The creation myth and other myths of the Quiché Mayan Indians of Guatemala is contained in a rare example of Mesoamerican literature, the ***Popol Vuh*** ("Council Book" or "Community Book"), written some 200 years after the Christianization of the Mayans—that is in about 1550—in the Quiché language transposed into the Latin alphabet probably from an earlier *Maya Codex* in Mayan hieroglyphs. Though the 1550 manuscript was lost, a copy of an 18th-century copy by Friar Francisco Ximénez survives. (*See* Part II; Mayan).

Prajapati

Prajapati is the primal being in the creation myths of the Hindu scriptures known as the *Brahmanas* (*See* Brahmanas). In the *Upanishads* he is essentially the same being as Brahma, the creator god in the Hindu (*See* Hindu) *trimurti* of Brahma (*See* Brahma), Vishnu (*See* Vishna), and Shiva (*See* Shiva). In the later *Mahabharata*, however, has become a lesser deity whose job is to create things. There are several Brahmanic myths about the way Prajapati created the world. The *Aitareya Brahmana* contains an incest story that echoes the *Rig Veda* creation myth. According to this myth, Prajapati took the form of a stag and had intercourse with his daughter, (the sky or dawn), she becoming a doe. for the act. The gods disapproved of this incestuous deed and Rudra, who later evolved into Shiva, shot the perpetrator with an arrow causing Prajapati's seed to flow forth and become a lake protected by Agni (Fire). Out of this fire and lake came Brhaspati, the lord of the sacred speech, and sometimes Indra, who was responsible for proper sacrifices and *mantras*. In the *Kausitaki Brahmana*, Prajapati's sons are seduced by his daughter. Their spilled seed is collected by Prajapati in a golden bowl, out of which emerges the thousand-eyed Bhava or "Existence," a version of the old Vedic Primal Man or Purusha (*See* Purusha). In the *Satapatha Brahmana* Prajapati masturbates and spills his seed into Agni. The seed becomes sacred milk of clarified butter used in sacrifices. Because he produced progeny and made proper sacrifices, thus setting a standard for humans, Prajapati, saved himself and existence from the death that is Agni (Fire). (*See* Part II, Indian).

Prakriti

Prakriti ("Nature") in the mythology of ancient Vedic India is the female element with which the Primal Male, the Purusha (*See* Purusha) must unite so as to become realized as the universe. (*See* Part II; Indian).

Primal Mound

In the Heliopolis form of Egyptian mythology (*See* Egyptian Mythology), Heliopolis itself was the Primeval Mound, the first land to emerge at Creation from the primordial waters (*See* Primordial Waters). The Primal Mound was symbolized by sand in the pyramids of kings. In royal burial rituals the statue of the dead king was placed on the "Mound," thus symbolizing his divinity, and causing his father, the sun god, to recognized him in the afterlife. (*See* Part II; Egyptian).

Primordial Waters

The primal or primeval sea is often the pre-existing material containing—often with the sky—the potential for creation.

The primordial waters are especially prevalent in earth-diver creations, serving as maternal waters in which are found the material necessary for the creation of Earth. In this sense, as earth material originates from the maternal waters, earth becomes "Mother Earth" associated with the more usually paternal sky, often the home of a male creator, who in creation myths sometimes sends down a sky-based maiden to act as what is essentially a procreative seed. (*See* Earth Mother, Part III; Earth-Diver Creation, Sky Woman Descends).

Prometheus

The Titan Prometheus was the brother of Pandora's (*See* Pandora) husband Epimetheus ("Afterthought") and Atlas, who in Greek mythology holds up the world. He earned the animosity of the Olympian (*See* Olympians) High God Zeus (*See* Zeus) by stealing fire from the gods and generally serving as a helpful culture hero to humans. Some of the ancients claimed that it was Prometheus who actually created the first man, Phaenon, from clay and water. Acting as a de facto trickster (*See* Trickster), Prometheus taught humans how to trick Zeus into accepting fat covered bones rather than good cuts of meat in sacrifices. Zeus reacted against Prometheus and his human friends by tricking Epimetheus into accepting the gift of Pandora and her box of evils. Furthermore, he had Prometheus tied to a rock on Mount Caucasus, where an eagle tore out his liver every day for 1000 years (it grew back each night), until the hero Herakles finally released the defiant prisoner. Some of Prometheus's story is told in a play by Aeschylus, the *Prometheus Bound*. (*See* Greek Mythology, Part II; Greek).

Prophesying Woman

In the American Southwest, Prophesying Woman is the great creator goddess of the Zia Pueblo. Among her several mythological relatives are Thinking Woman (*See* Thinking Woman) and Spider Woman (*See* Spider Woman).

Ptah

Ptah was the god of the Primal Mound (*See* Primal Mound), the creator god of the Memphite version of Egyptian mythology. He was the "self-begotten One" who created ex nihilo by way of his own thoughts and words. One could say of Ptah's creation, as in the case of Christian vision of God and the *Logos* ("Word"), "In the beginning was the Word (*Logos*)" (*See* Part II; Christian). It was Ptah who established all the principles of life and existence. (*See* Egyptian Mythology, Part II; Egyptian).

Puana

In the beginning in the Yaruro creation myth of Venezuela, there was only Puana, the water serpent, who came and created the world. Later, his brother Itciai (*See* Itciai), the jaguar, created water. It was their sister, Kuma (*See* Kuma), who made the Yaruro people.

Pueblo People

The term "Pueblo People" in the American Southwest usually refers to the Tewa (*See* Tewa), Keres (*See* Keres), and Tiwa-speaking peoples who live is villages along or near the Rio Grande River in New Mexico, including, for example, the Taos, San Juan, Santa Clara, San Ildefonso, and Zia Indians. The term is

sometimes expanded to include people further west—the Laguna, Acoma, and the non Tewa/Keres speaking Zuni, and Hopi, for instance—who also live in established villages, or pueblos (*See* Part II; Acoma, Hopi, Laguna, etc.).

Puma Snake and Jaguar Snake

The Mesoamerican Mixtec deer god, Puma-Snake, and his wife, Jaguar-Snake, took human form at the beginning of time and tamed the chaos.

Pu Ngoe Nga Ngoe

The Pu Ngoe Nga Ngoe are the old couple who came to Earth with the Lao culture hero. They are the ancestors of the Lao people (*See* Kun Borom, Part II; Lao)

Pun Miaupa and Halai Auna

Pun Miaupa is a hero of the Yana Indians of California. He struggled to win as his wife, Halai Auna—the Morning Star—the daughter of the Moon.

Puranas

The *Puranas* are texts composed early in the common era containing myths, legends and ritual instructions and often attributed to the sage Vyasa, also said to have been the author of the *Mahabharata* (*See* Mahabharata). A dominant theme of the *Puranas* it is that of *bhakti,* proper devotion. Two creation myths are developed from the myths of the *Puranas.* In the first creation the Primal Male or Purusha (*See* Purusha) is also designated as Atman or Brahman (*See* Brahman) or Mahayogin ("Great Yogi"). But unlike the original Purusha, who as sacrificial victim becomes the universe, this creator uses yoga to create by releasing the active female aspect of nature (Prakriti). In the other myth, an earth-diver creation, the Purusha Narayana (Vishnu) who has been asleep on the primordial waters (*See* Primordial Waters), wakes up between two *kalpas* (ages) and becomes the creator Brahma (see above) and then Vayu ("Wind") and then the Vishnu *avatara* (incarnation) the Cosmic Boar, Varaha, who serves as the diver who will bring up earth from the depths. The Puranic cosmogony also contains stories of the dissolution of existence in the cosmic fire that emerges from the breath of Rudra (Shiva). Creative work is completed by Vayaa and floods.

Purusha

Purusha (Sanskrit for "person" or "man"), as reveled in the "Purusha Hymn" of the ancient Indian scripture, the *Rig Veda* (see below) is the "first man", a form of the universe past and present and future. He is the object of the sacrifice, from which came existence. His mouth became Brahman (*See* Brahman), his consciousness became the moon. Later, in the *Upanishads* (*See* Upanishads) Purusha became synonymous with Brahman, the Absolute, the universal "self" (Atman). The Purusha came into existence ex nihilo, knew himself and exclaimed, "I am." As "Consciousness" he became associated in the ancient philosophical tradition of Sankhya with Prakriti ("Nature") (*See* Prakriti), the creative energy required for the realization of materiality. In an *Upanishad* story Purusha caused himself to become two—man and woman—and the result was humankind. But the woman, ashamed of the incestuous union with a man who had created her from himself, so she hid herself from him as a cow. But the man became a bull, had his way with her, and cattle were

born. The same thing happened when the woman hid as other animals and in this way, the world was populated.

Later, as Hindu mythology developed, the Purusha concept was somewhat superseded by Brahman, Atman, and figures such as Prajapati, Brahma, and Vishnu. (*See* Animism, Hinduism, Part II; Indian, Part III; Sacrifice as Creation)

Pyramid Texts

The so-called *Pyramid Texts* are funeral inscriptions on pyramid walls and in other royal burial chambers in ancient Egypt. They date from c. 2375 B.C.E. and thus precede the Coffin texts that appear later in the burial places of non royals. The Pyramid texts contain material probably preserved orally from the Neolithic (*See* Neolithic) period. They include spells, incantations, and myths meant to ensure the safe passage of the king in the afterlife. (*See* Egyptian Mythology).

Pyrrha and Deucalion

Pyrrha, the daughter of Pandora (*See* Pandora) and Prometheus's (*See* Prometheus) brother Epimetheus, and her husband Deucalion, the son of Prometheus, were the only humans allowed to survive a great flood (*See* Flood) sent to destroy the world by the Greek high god Zeus. Deucalion built a ship for himself and Pyrrha, and in it they rode out the nine day flood, landing eventually on Mount Parnassus. After the flood the couple went down the mountain to consult with Themis, who was at that time the deity of the oracle at Delphi. Themis told them to throw the bones of their mother over their shoulders. The couple decided that their "mother" must be the Earth Mother (*See* Earth Mother) Gaia (*See* Gaia) and her bones must be stones. Where their stones landed, a new race of humans emerged, men from the stones of Deucalion, women from those of Pyrrha. The son of Deucalion and Pyrrha was Hellen, the father of the Hellenes (Greeks). (*See* Greek Mythology).

Quat

Quat (Qat), is the Melanesian creator-spirit. He used a tree as material out of which to carve the first three men and three women. Then he hid them for three days before enlivening them by dancing to a drum beat. Unfortunately, the spirit Marawa also fabricated human beings or Quat's humans would have been immortal. Marawa's method was to bury his humans for three days. When he dug them up they were already dead; in this way death came into the world. Quat created night and day and the passing of time so that agriculture became possible. (*See* Bank Islands).

Quechuan

The Quechuan people were ancestors of the South American Inca.

Quetzalcoatl

The Mesoamerican (*See* Mesoamerican) god Quetzalcoatl, the "Feathered Serpent" was an astral deity, a wind god, and a culture hero who taught the Aztecs their arts and crafts and the mysteries of the calendar. He descended to the underworld to obtain the bones with which to create the human race. In one of his early forms, he was one of the creators of the world. Like the god Huitzilopochtli (*See* Huitzilopochtli), Quetzalcoatl may have had hero rather than divine roots. In Toltec mythology, his perennial enemy was Tezcatlipoca, who as a jaguar, chased him out of Tollan. Quetzalcoatl

sailed away on a raft, but it was believed that, like King Arthur, he would return one day to save the people. According to tradition, the Aztecs, they took this myth all too literally and mistook the conquering Cortes for their long-for hero. (*See* Mesoamerican).

Qur'an

The holy scripture of Islam, the Qur'an is believed by Muslims to have been revealed directly to the Prophet Muhammad by way of the angel Jibril (Gabriel) gradually between 610 and 632 C.E., making Muhammad the "Messenger of Allah." The word Qur'an itself is derived from roots having to do with recitation and scripture. Thus Muhammad was commanded to say or recite the word of God sent to him. The book as eventually written down is made up of 114 chapters or *suras.* As literally the "word of God," for Muslims, the Qur'an is the basis for all proper life in all parts of the Islamic world, including Asia.

Revelation came to Muhammad when he was forty. For some years he had retreated for meditation to a cave (Ghar-i-Hira, "the cave of learning") on Mount Hira (Jabal-an-Nur, the "Mountain of Light") during the fasting month of Ramadan. On the 17th day of Ramadan during his fifth such retreat, Muhammad had the first of what would be many such experiences over a 22-year period, experiences reminiscent of the mountain revelations to Moses and the mountain transfiguration of Jesus.

On the 17th day of Ramadan, as Muhammad was sleeping, he was overpowered by the presence of divinity, apparently as represented by the angel Jibril



Ancient Mauritanian edition of the Qur'an, the holy book of the religion of Islam. (Larry Sampas)

(Qur'an 53:1–18). The angel recognized Muhammad as Allah's Messenger (*rasul*) through whom Allah's words would be revealed directly to humankind. The angel taught Muhammad the proper rituals of prayer and then commanded him to recite, or say (*iqra*) the words of Allah. Like Moses, and so many heroes, Muhammad at first refused the call, saying he was not a reciter, not a *kabin* ("soothsayer"). Then the angel squeezed him—three times—taking away his breath until finally Muhammad agreed to recite, beginning the Qur'an (the "recitation") with the words "Recite in the name of thy sustainer, who has created—created man out of a germ-cell! Recite—for thy sustainer is the Most Bountiful, One who has taught [man]the use of the pen—taught him what he did not know" (Qur'an 96:1, Muhammad Asad trans; Armstrong 1993,137). Shocked by his vision, Muhammad turned to his wife, Khadija, throwing himself in her lap. Khadija recognized him as a prophet and reassured him, for which reason she is much revered by Muslims. Over the next 22 years the Prophet would receive the Qur'an, the true miracle (*mu'jizah*) of Islam, bit by bit.

Ra

The god Ra (Re) was the supreme deity of many regions of Ancient Egypt. He was the personified sun. At various times and places he was assimilated with other gods, becoming Atum-Re, Re-Atum, Amun (Amon)-Re or Re Amun (*See* Amun, Amun-Re above). As the morning sun he was Khepri (*See* Khepri) represented by the scarab. As the hot noonday sun, he was associated with the god Horus as Re-Harakhti, symbolized by a human body with the head of a falcon, toped with a solar disk. The evening sun was sometimes Re-Atum wearing the Pharaonic crown. Re descended to the underworld each night. He was attacked by his enemy, Apopis (Apep) and was defended by Seth and spirits of the dead. (*See* Egyptian Mythology, Part II; Egyptian).

Ramayana

With the *Mahabharata,* the *Ramayana* forms one of the world's greatest epic achievements. The *Ramayana* is the story of the Indian god Vishnu's (*See* Vishnu) avatar or incarnation, Rama, and his wife, Sita, the incarnation of Vishnu's wife, Lakshmi (*See* Lakshmi) and their struggle against the forces of evil.

Rangi and Papa

The Maori and other Polynesian peoples say that Rangi (Sky Father) and Papa (Earth Mother) were the first parents, but that they clung together so tightly that their children, led by a son, had no choice but to separate them with force.

Raven

Raven is one of the premier Native North American and Central Asian culture hero/trickster/creators, In North America he is particularly popular along the northern Pacific coast. Like other tricksters, such as Coyote (*See* Coyote), Raven is often obscene, self-centered, and he can be foolish, as in the Chukchee creation myth

Some tribes say that Raven was conceived miraculously by a woman who swallowed some natural object. (*See* Culture Hero, Trickster, Part II; Chuckchee,

Haida, Inupiat, Kodiac, Kukulic, Modoc, Salinan, Tlingit, Tshimshian, Yokut, Part III; Raven in Creation).

Rig Veda

The *Rig Veda* or *Rgveda* (after *rks* meaning *mantra*) is the oldest of the sacred scriptures made up of Indo-Aryan mantras and hymns, dating from about 2000–1700 B.C.E. These writings are believed to have been directly revealed seers (*rsis*) by a divine power. There are 10 books or *mandalas* in the *Rig Veda*, each attributed to a privileged family of seer-sages. These books are the primary source for any study of the most ancient Indian mythology. They are the foundation for the development of Hinduism. The development of mythology within the *Rig Veda* follows a path beginning with stories dominated by the god Varuna, the fire god Agni, and the cult of *soma*, then moves to a phase centered on the warrior gods under the leadership of Indra, and finally to a final phase featuring both non-Aryan Indus Valley-Dravidian gods such as Rudra-Shiva, the Goddess (Devi), and popular Aryan (*See* Aryan) figures such as Vishnu. The *Rig Veda* is perhaps best known for its cosmogonic or creation myths. (*See* Hinduism, Part II; Indian)

Romulus and Remus

Romulus and Remus, were twins (*See* Twins) born of the union of the Roman god Mars and the mortal woman Rhea Silva. Rhea Silva's name derives from the words for Earth and woodlands. The story says that she had been forced into becoming a Vestal Virgin by her uncle Amulius, the king, who hoped thus to keep her from producing a rival heir to the throne he had usurped from her father, Numitor. Soon after they were born, the evil king had them placed in a small vessel and left them to float away in the Tiber. When the vessel ran aground, a female wolf discovered the children and suckled them. Later the boys were adopted by a shepherd. They grew and became strong and fearless. One day Remus was overcome in a quarrel with his grandfather Numitor's followers and taken to Numitor to be punished. Romulus went to his brother's rescue, however, and the twins were revealed as Numitor's grandsons. The family now defeated Amulius and restored Numitor to his throne. Romulus and Remus went to the place along the Tiber where they had been rescued by the wolf and there they founded Rome. A quarrel between the brothers over which one should give his name to the new city resulted in the death of Remus, and so Rome took its name from Romulus. (*See* Part II; Roman).

Rudra

Rudra is a name in the Indian *Vedas* for the god later better known as Shiva (*See* Shiva).

Sa

Sa (Death) was the original creator god of the Kono people in Africa.

Sacrifice

Sacrifice can be central to certain creation myths and to rituals in various traditions. Many deities have traditionally required that sacrifices be made to them. The offerings may be symbolic or literal, vegetable or animal. Abraham (*See* Abraham)

was instructed by Yahweh (*See* Yahweh) to offer Isaac as a sacrifice and did so. Scapegoats (*See* Scapegoats) of various kinds may be used to substitute for offerings that the society in question is unable or unwilling to give up. An animal was substituted for Isaac and Christians say that Jesus (*See* Jesus) died as a one time and last time offering In Asian mythologies and religions sacrifice plays important roles. Japanese emperors offered sacrifices to the dead and to Shinto nature divinities (Kami). The Chinese Emperor, representing his people, made winter solstice sacrifices to the gods and to the dead. Sacrifice is important in the bear cults of the Ainu and to the indigenous religions of Indonesia, as represented, for example, in the Hainuwele (*See* Hainuwele) myth.

In the Indo European (*See* Indo European) traditions, sacrifice is the essence of existence—part of an endless round of dissolution and renewal. The world itself and life for the Hindu is the sacrifice—that which is destroyed and recreated through the eons of history. In the Vedic tradition, life emerges from the sacrifice of the first man, or Purusha (*See* Purusha), and the continuance of existence depends on the proper practice of ritual sacrifice, associated with other deities In a sense Vishnu becomes the Purusha in a later Hindu myth of his self-decapitation by which he emerges as the primary god-sacrifice. Sacrifice is also central to the fire rituals of the Iranian Zoroastrians.

Norse mythology (*See* Norse Mythology), with the story of Ymir, contains its example of a Purusha-like Creation sacrifice, the sacrificed Ymir becoming the world, much as the Native North American Corn Mother (*See* Corn Mother) does. (*See* Part III; Sacrifice as Creation)

Sat Guru

In the Sikh tradition of India, Sat Guru—the ultimate teacher, was the creator of everything that is.

Satan

In the monotheistic Abrahamic (Christian, Jewish, Muslim) traditions, Satan, meaning "enemy" in Hebrew, known as al-Shaytan (Shaitan) in Arabic, and often called the Devil (*See* Devil) in the New Testament (*See* New Testament) of the Bible (*See* Bible) and other Christian writings, is the primary adversary of Yahweh-God-Allah. In Hebrew scripture *the satan* is simply an evil entity until in 1 *Chronicles* 21:1, when that entity takes on the proper name, *Satan.* The Serpent in the Book of *Genesis* has, of course, at least in the later Jewish tradition and in the Christian tradition, been seen as an embodiment of that Satan, as has *the satan,* the figure who, with Yahweh's permission, tests Job in the Book of *Job* (1 and 2).

In Christian mythology—given a romantically defiant personality by the 17th-century poet John Milton in his literary epic *Paradise Lost*—Satan, the Devil, who corrupted Adam and Eve (*See* Adam and Eve) in the Garden of Eden, has gained considerable power in the world, tempting Jesus (*See* Jesus), much as Mara the Fiend tempts the Buddha (*See* Buddha). In Christian (*See* Christian) mythology Satan is overpowered by Jesus when he descends to Hell after his death, and will enter the eternal fire

with his fellow "fallen angels" at the Last Judgment. In Islamic mythology, al-Shaytan is Iblis (the "devil") and his followers, who refuse Allah's protection in favor of a path that leads to Hell (*jahannam*). (*See* Part II; Hebrew)

Saturn

Saturn or Saturnus, was, associated by the Romans with the Greek god Kronos (*See* Kronos), the leader of the pre-Olympians (*See* Olympians). In fact, Saturn was an ancient pre-Roman fertility god in Italy.

Scapegoat

The scapegoat archetype (*See* Archetype) is fairly common in mythologies from various traditions. In the Jewish tradition, the scapegoat was one of two goats used in a ritual celebration on the Day of Atonement in the Temple. While one goat was sacrificed to Yahweh (*See* Yahweh), the other was thrown over a cliff to take the sins of the people with it. In some cultures prisoners play the scapegoat role. Prometheus (*See* Prometheus) was a prisoner of Zeus; he suffered for the humanity he had saved. In some traditions it was believed that the scapegoat sacrifice could result in new life—a new beginning, even a new creation. The myths of dying gods (*See* Dying God), including those of such figures as Jesus (*See* Jesus) and the Egyptian Osiris may be said to be scapegoat myths, since these deaths result in physical or spiritual fertility and new life. In the scapegoat myth the hero metaphorically carries the sins of the society away with him into the sacrificial death and leaves his people clean and ready to be reborn. (*See* Sacrifice, Part III; Sacrifice as Creation).

Sea Woman

Sea Woman was the first creator in Salinan Indian mythology. She became jealous of a new creator, Eagle, and caused a flood before she died.

Sedi and Melo

In the beginning in the mythology of the Minyong people of India, there was the female, Sedi, who was earth, and the male, Melo, who was sky. These first parents were separated by their offspring, who were afraid they might be crushed by the lovemaking of the great couple (*See* Part III; Separation of Heaven and Earth in Creation).

Sedna

Sedna (Nuliajuk) is the sea spirit if the Inuit people, the other primary spirits being on the air and of the moon. Sedna provides the animals eaten by the people There are various stories of this spirit but all have somewhat violent animistic aspects in which parts of Sedna herself become creatures of value to the Inuit. (*See* Dismemberment, Sacrifice, Part II; Oqomuit)

Semites

In the ancient Middle Eastern world of Mesopotamia, Arabia, and Canaan (now Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Israel, and Palestine) lived Semitic peoples, with related languages, including the post-Sumerian Akkadians, Babylonians, and Assyrians, the Arameans, the Canaanites (including the Phoenicians and the people of Ugarit), the Hebrew-Israelites, and the Arabs. Abraham (Ibrahim) was a hero revered by many of the Semites, as were a number of patriarchs and prophets. Out of their Abrahamic roots, the Sem-

ites produced the Abrahamic religions—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—all dedicated to the same god, known as Yahweh, God, and Allah. Mythologically, the Semites are said to have descended from Noah's (*See* Noah) oldest son, Shem (Sem).Most scholars believe that the Semites originated in Arabia.

Shakti

A given Hindu god's *Shakti* (Sanskrit for "energy", "power") is his energizing material power personified as his wife, especially the wife of Shiva. Often depicted in a state of sexual union, the god and his *shakti* together represent the Absolute, the god being non-activated Eternity, the goddess being activated Time. The Goddess, Devi, *is Shakti* or "Universal Power." As Prakriti, she is the Shakti or female energy by which the original Purusha, the primal male, becomes creation. As Lakshmi, she is the manifestation of the divine energy associated with Vishnu. Shiva's *Shakti* takes many forms—Uma, Durga, the terrifying Kali, the motherly Parvati, for instance. By extension, Sita is the Vishnu avatar Rama's *Shakti* in the *Ramayana,* and Draupadi is the *Shakti* of the Pandavas in the *Mahabharata*. And by further extension, the Hindu wife is a manifestation of her husband's *Shakti*. By still further extension, *Shakti* lives in all women. (*See* Hinduism).

Shamans

Shamans are "medicine people" specially trained in disciplines that allow them to cure and to mediate with spirits. Shamans have been said to be able to enter trances that make it possible for them to descend into the spirit world. Although they exist in many parts of the world, shamans are particularly evident in Central Asia, Africa, and Native America, where, in typically animistic (*See* Animism) cultures, spirits abound. The powerful shaman can control the spirits, and he can communicate with the dead. Often he wears bones signifying the skeletal remains of the dead. His is a mystical vocation in that he works from an otherworldly state of ecstasy. A shaman might come to his (or her) vocation because of a dream message or because he is trained as an apprentice by a master shaman. The shaman learns to control and use certain ritualistic paraphernalia—especially the drum, the vehicle on which he travels to the other worlds—and he must memorize the necessary ritual forms and songs. Some shamans undergo an initiation period during which they seem to die. According to these shamans they are dismembered before being given new flesh and blood.

Shamash

Shamash was the sun god of the ancient Mesopotamians, including especially the Sumerians and the Assyrians.

Shida Matunda

Shida Matunda was the creator of the world in the mythology of the Nyamwezi mythology of Tanzania.

Shiktur

Shiktur was the devil figure who undermined the creator's work in the mythology of the Buriat people of Siberia.

Shinto

Shinto (the "*kami* way") is a Japanese polytheistic (*See* Polytheism) system that expresses the ancient Japanese world

view. Shinto is often thought of as a way of life rather than a religion *per se*. Shinto's foundation is a belief in *kami* (*See* Kami). Originally the word *kami* was used to describe any mysterious or sacred reality, anything that seemed to possess numinosity. In a sense, though, everything is potentially *kami* and, thus, worthy of reverence. Because of the concept of kami, Shinto at once affects both the major and minor aspects of life—the way tea is served, the way a package is wrapped, the way a war is fought, and the way an emperor is crowned. Gradually the kami came to be thought of as deities who lived in natural objects or phenomena. Shinto shrines and rituals that had been local and agricultural in nature, became associated with larger entities, even with clans and the nation as a whole. The gods of Shinto are directly related to the imperial family and thus to the Japanese state. It could be argued that all Japanese are practitioners of Shinto, even if they happen to be Buddhist (*See* Buddhism) as well. By the eighth century, Shinto and Buddhism achieved a kind of marriage, so that now Shinto and Buddhist deities sometimes seem to be merged, with deities of one religion honored in the temples of the other.

Early Shinto envisioned a standard Northern Asian cosmology made up of an upper world or Heaven (*Takamanohara*) for the gods, a middle world (*Nakatsukuni*) for humans, and an underworld (*Yomi*) for the dead. Yet early Shinto imagined an adjacent eternal paradise (Tokoyo) across the sea. Under Chinese influence local and clan-based Shinto myths became somewhat standardized at a national level. This process coincided with the political drive for national unification and began to take concrete form during the reign of the Emperor Temmu (672–687). Finally, mythological unity came with the creation of the two primary sacred books of Shinto the *Kojiki* (*See* Kojiki) and the *Nihongi* (*See* Nihongi) early in the eighth century C.E. These books contain the purest form of Shinto mythology, including with the stories of and descriptions of the Shinto deities and, most important, the creation myth, featuring the creator *kamis,* Izanagi and his wife Izanami (*See* Izanami) who created the natural world and various clans before their tragic separation and enmity. Their most important offspring the sun goddess Amaterasu (*See* Amaterasu), whose descendants were said to have founded the Japanese nation. The first couple also produced the moon god Tsukiyomi no Mikoto, and the underworld god Susanowo. It was Susanowo's offspring, Okuninushi no Kami, who is said to have ruled Japan until the coming of Ninigi no Mikoto, the grandson of Amaterasu. Ninigi's grandson Jimmu Tenno who reigned as the first emperor. (*See* Part II; Japanese).

Shiva

In the trinity or *trimurti* of Hinduism (*See* Hinduism), Shiva, is the "destroyer" with Vishnu (*See* Vishnu) the Preserver, and Brahma (*See* Brahma) the creator. For practitioners of Shiva devotion, he is the primary embodiment of ultimate divinity, Brahman (*See* Brahman). It seems likely that Shiva, like the Goddess, Devi (*See* Devi) has roots in the ancient pre-Aryan (*See* Aryans) culture. An Indus Valley seal from the city of Harappa reveals a triple-faced figure sitting in a yogi style, suggesting the yogi-ascetic that the god

was to become in later Hinduism. In the *Vedas* (*See* Vedas) Shiva is usually Rudra. It was not until the second century B.C.E. that the god became the equal and sometimes the superior of Vishnu and the other gods. In the epic poem the *Mahabharata* (*See* Mahabharata) he is worshipped by his fellow gods. Shiva's role as god of destruction is related to his role as the god of generation. The message of this duality is that without death there can be no life; the process of the universe is one of destruction and generation, death and renewal. It is not surprising, therefore, that Shiva is often depicted in union with his *Shakti* (*See* Shakti)—his materializing power—or that he is worshipped by way of the *linga* (sacred phallus), often planted in the *yoni*, (sacred female sexual organ), which can represent the that Shakti. Shiva is Nataraja, the Lord of the dance, whose movements are the process of the Universe itself. He is the ultimate yogi-ascetic. He brings *moksa* (release), to those who follow him. (*See* Hinduism, Part II; Indian).



Statue of Shiva in a Hanuman temple in Delhi. (Dreamstime)

Sholmo

In a variant of the Central Asian Buriat creation, the creation itself is threatened by a devil, Sholmo.

Shu and Tefnut

In the ancient Egyptian cult center of Heliopolis, Shu ("Air") and Tefnut ("Moisture") were produced by the Sun god Atum or Atum-Re (see above). They in turn produced Geb and Nut ("Earth" and "Sky") (*See* Geb and Nut), who in turn became the parents of four of the primary figures in a dominant Egyptian myth: Osiris, Isis, Seth, and Nephtys. It was Shu who separated his children Geb and Nut so that air, and further creation could exist between earth and sky. (*See* Egyptian Mythology, Part II; Egyptian).

Silver Fox

Silver Fox is the industrious creator in the Achomawi creation myth of Northern California. His companion, Coyote, is less constructive.

Singbonga

A variant of the Hindu god Vishnu in the central Indian Birhor mythology, Singbonga is the creator who rests on a lotus plant.

Sioux

The Sioux Indians of Native North America are a family of Siouan speaking

peoples that include the Lakota, Dakota, White Water, and Brule peoples. Other tribes that speak Siouan languages include the Assiniboine, the Crow, the Manda, the Osage, and the Winnebago (*See* Part II; Assiniboine, Crow, Manda, Osage, Winnebago).

Sipapu

See Kiva above

Sky City

Sky City is a name often applied to the Southwestern Native American village of Acoma, which sits high above the desert on a butte.

Sky Father

Father Sky and Mother Earth are probable prehistoric mythological metaphors. Later, sky gods, especially of the male variety, as opposed to earth deities, express a value system or world view in which supreme creator gods are seen as living "on high"—"Our Father who art in Heaven"—distant from humans, whereas earth goddesses are Earth itself, the world depend on for survival. The most powerful sky gods—various solar gods, and the likes of Zeus (*See* Zeus), Yahweh-God-Allah (*See* Allah, God, Yahweh), for example—tend to be male. While the most important earth deities—Gaia (*See* Gaia), and Spider Woman (*See* Spider Woman), for example—tend to be female. The Sky-Earth, Male-Female division coincides with and reflects societal roles of men and women in most societies, at least after the second millennium B.C.E. The more agricultural, matriarchal or even merely matrilineal the culture, the more important earth mother (*See* Earth Mother) goddesses tend to be, the more patriarchal, military and urban-oriented, the more important the sky father. The father aspect of the sky gods, who often personify storms and weather patterns, is logical in the context of agriculture, in the process of which the elements of the sky—rain and sun and wind, for instance—make possible the fertilization of Earth.

Sky Woman

Sky Woman or Star Woman is a name applicable to the woman who falls from the sky in many earth-diver (*See* Earth-Diver Creation) myths, especially those of the eastern Native North American peoples. Typically, her fall is broken by animals who, from the primordial waters (*See* Primordial Waters) watch her fall. It is she who almost always becomes a de facto earth mother, arranging life on the new earth formed after one of the animals descends to the maternal depths to find the bit of mud out of which the world will be made. (*See* Part II; Cherokee, Mohawk, Seneca, Part III; Sky Woman Descends).

Sombov

Sombov is the creator in one of the Central Asian Buriat earth-diver creation myths.

Sophia

Gnostics incorporated Sophia, the Divine Wisdom of the Hebrew Bible's *Book of Proverbs* into their sense of deity.

Spider Woman

One of the major Native North American goddesses, Spider Woman (sometimes Spider Grandmother) or figures like her,

can be found among most of the southwestern pueblo cultures, including, especially the Hopis, and she was adopted early on by the Navajos and Cherokee. In many emergence creation myths (*See* Part I; Emergence Creation) she is the active colleague supreme being in the process by which the people emerge from one world to the next. Spider Woman, who herself emerges from the womb of the earth, is a representative of Mother Earth herself. And when the people finally arrive in this world Spider Woman is, in effect, a culture hero (*See* Culture Hero), who teaches them how to survive, physically and morally. (*See* Part II; Acoma, Cherokee, Chukchee, Hopi, Laguna, Tewa, Zia).

Spirit of the Word and Spirit of Nature

In Zoroastrianism, the spiritual creation was the place of the Spirit of the Power of the Word. The material creation was the place of the Spirit of the Power of Nature.

Stag God and Stag Goddess

The Maya of the Yucatan peninsula in present day Mexico say that in the darkness of the beginning of time, a Stag god (Puma Snake) and a Stag goddess (Jaguar Snake) came into being, took human form and through their sexual union produced the world. (*See* Part II; Mixtec).

Storm God

Many mythologies, especially, but by no means exclusively those that represent societies with strong agricultural concerns, have gods who can be called weather gods or storm gods. Many of these gods are associated with lightning and thunder, The Norse (*See* Norse Mythology) Norse Thor, the German Donar, and the Celtic Taranis, are examples. For the Sumerians (*See* Sumerians) and the Semites (*See* Semites) who came after them in Mesopotamia and Canaan (*See* Part II; Canaanite) there are storm gods such as Baal (*See* Baal) and Dagan who were thought to affect the rain-drought fertility cycles so crucial to the agriculture of the area. The Babylonian Tiamat (*See* Tiamat) is a chaotic storm goddess who is subdued by a more powerful, and, from the Babylonian perspective, positive storm god, Marduk. The Hittite-Hurrian (*See* Part II; Anatolian) Taru or Tesub plays a dominant role in Hittite-Hurrian narratives. Storm gods like the Sumerian Enlil (*See* Enlil) and the Hebrew Yahweh send floods to punish humanity. Some storm gods are merely arbitrary in their destructiveness, thus explaining horrendous natural disasters. Examples are African Yoruba Shango, the several Polynesian (*See* Part II; Polynesian) gods, and the Japanese (*See* Part II; Japanese) Susanowo.

Sturluson, Snorri

The work of the Icelander Snorri Sturluson (1179–1241), particularly his *Prose Edda* (*See* Prose Edda) of c. 1220 C.E., provides us with our primary source for Norse mythology (*See* Norse Mythology). Snorri was a lawyer, a historian, a politician, and, above all, a poet, translator, and mythologist. For his work, Snorri depended on his knowledge of Eddic and skaldic poetry and on his own talent as a saga writer. His mission was to encourage Iceland poets not to lose sight of the

stories and methods of skaldic and Eddic poetry.

Suelick

Suelick was the primary creator god of the Skagit Indians in what is now the state of Washington. In the beginning Suelick made four powerful brothers named Schodelick, Swadick, Hode, and Stoodke. Suelick told his brothers to create Earth and people, which they did.

Sumerians

By the fourth millennium B.C.E., a people in Mesopotamia (*See* Mesopotamia) we know as the Sumerians, were well on the way to establishing a religious, legal, and architectural basis that would dominate the Fertile Crescent even after they had been conquered and essentially eliminated by Semitic invaders. The epic of *Gilgamesh,* the great ziggurats—stepped pyramid-like structures in honor of the gods, the development of cities and a sophisticated a mythological system were a few of the inventions of these people, and for many centuries after their demise their language would remain the vehicle of learning and culture in Mesopotamian schools.

The Sumerians were a non-Semitic speaking people of Kengir, now southern Iraq. Their origins are a mystery; it is assumed that they probably arrived in Mesopotamia from Central Asia in the fourth millennium B.C.E. and mixed with other non-Semitic people, called Ubaidians, who had been there from at least the fifth millennium. It was the Ubaidians who first established proto-cities along the southern marsh lands, places that became the Sumerian cities of Ur, Eridu, Adab, Isin, Larsa, Lagash, Nippur and Unug (better known by its later Semitic names, Uruk or Erech). The Ubaidians were skilled at farming, animal husbandry, pottery, and other crafts.

The period immediately following the Ubaid is generally called the Early and Middle Uruk periods (c. 4000–3500 B.C.E.). Then came the Proto-literate and Late Uruk Sumerian periods c. 3500–3100 B.C.E.). The Late Uruk period coincided with the Pre-dynastic period of Egypt (*See* Egyptian Mythology)

The Late Uruk or Predynastic Sumerian period, is characterized by civilized elements such as elaborate sculpture, monumental architecture and a governmental assembly with elected religious and civil leaders. But easily the most important contribution of the Sumerians of the late fourth millennium was writing. This writing system is known as *cuneiform* (<Latin cuneus = "wedge" and forma = "shape") because it was symbols pressed into little squares on clay tablets.

Some of the most important Sumerian myths, along with the creation myth, are those of the great goddess Inanna (later Ishtar) and those of the trickster (*See* Trickster) god Enki (*See* Enki) and Gilgamesh (*See* Gilgamesh). (*See* Part II; Sumerian).

Supreme Being

Most cultures have a deity, who is either more powerful than all others or, as in the case of the monotheists (*See* Monotheism), or who is the only god. The supreme being is almost always the primary creator in the creation myth, and almost

always a sky god (*See* Sky God), usually associated with the sun. In many cases the supreme being instigates creation and then leaves it to others—earth goddesses (*See* Earth Goddess) or culture heroes (*See* Culture Hero)—to finish. In patriarchal societies, which is to say, most societies, the supreme deity is male, reflecting the dominant earthly social structure. (*See* Deus Otiosus).

Ta'aroa

Ta'aroa (Taaroa) is the Tahitian name for a Polynesian creator god It is said that Taaroa lived in his cosmic egg-like shell for a long time, but that finally he broke out of it and held it up to make the dome-sky, Rumia. Out of himself he made the world.

Taautus

Taautus was a Phoenecian god who was said to have invented writing and to have been involved in creation.

Tagaloa

Tagaloa-fa'atutupu-nu'u was the creator in Samoan mythology. He is mythologically related to other Polynesian creators such as Ta'aroa (*See* Polynesian).

T'ai-i

In Chinese, T'ai represents the "Supreme Being" (*See* Supreme Being) and in Daoism he can be the inner equivalent of the ultimate divinity. *T'ai-Tao,* a form of Daoism, is a name that means "the path of the Supreme Being." The concept of *T'ai-chi,* is based on is the source of all being, including the *yin-yang* and the four ways of combining Heaven and Earth, and eventually the five elements of creation. All of this is represented in the meditative exercise known as *Tai-chi-ch'üan*.

The related term Ti or Shang-ti was the creator god of the Shang dynasty during the second millennium B.C.E., and *T'ien* ("Nature" and "Supreme Being") was used as early as the second millennium B.C.E. by the Chou people. The ultimate root meaning of these words "sky"—where the gods were thought to live. In the Chou period (1111–256 B.C.E.), T'ien interacted personally with the human world, and the King was T'ien's viceroy on Earth. In the *I Ching*, T'ien is Heaven and Ti is Earth, the father and mother gods whose union becomes creation. For Buddhists Tian (T'ien) represents impersonal Nature. Still another term to develop from the original root is Tiandi, literally "Heaven-Earth," still another name for the Supreme God of ancient China.

T'ai-hao, a version of T'ai, is the name of an ancient Chinese god who in later Han texts became confused with the god-Emperor Fuxi. (*See* Part II; Chinese).

Taiko-mol

The creator in the mythology of the Californian Yuki people is Taiko-mol (Solitary Walker), who creates as a deus faber (*See* Deus Faber).

Taliesen

The Welsh equivalent of the Irish Amairgen (*See* Amairgen), Taliesen was a poet-prophet with great creative powers.

Talking God

In Navajo mythology, Talking God is the leader of the Yeii (*See* Yeii), personifications of natural powers.

Talmud

An important body of Jewish discourse, the *Talmud* is a collection of rabbinic texts relating to such matters as Jewish law and customs, written in stages between 200 and 500 C.E. (*See* Judaism).

Tane-Mahutu

Many Polynesians say that in the beginning, when Rangi and Papa (*See* Heaven and Earth) were coupled in darkness, their the son, Tumatauenga, wanted to kill them, but his brother, Tane-Mahutu, suggested the simpler process of separating the parents to provide space and light.

Tangaroa

In the Maori version of Polynesian mythology, Tangaroa was a son of Rangi and Papa (*See* Rangi and Papa) and the father of the hero Maui. (*See* Ta'aroa)

Tara

In Tibetan Buddhist (*See* Buddhist) myth, Tara, the female counterpart to the bodhisattva Avalokitesvara (*See* Avalokitesvara), is a savior goddess, sometimes called the "Mother of Buddhas." In one story she took the form of a rock demoness, mated with Avalokitesvara in his form as a monkey, and gave birth to monkeys who gradually became the Tibetans. Another myth says that Tara was born of Avalokitesvara's tears as he looked back at the world he was leaving for Nirvana (*See* Nirvana). In Hinduism Tara is a form of the Goddess (*See* Devi). There is a Tantric version of Tara, especially as the *shakti* (*See* Shakti) in union with Avalokitesvara.

Tatara-Rabuga

The supreme being of the Garo people of India, Tatara-Rabuga decided there should be a world, so he sent the female spirit, Nostu-Nōpantu (*See* Nostu-Nōpantu), to do the creating.

Tawa

In some versions of the Hopi Indian creation, Tawa is the sun and the original creator of the world. He is closely associated with Spider Woman (*See* Spider Woman).

Temaukl

The tribes of Tierra del Fuego of the islands off Cape Horn have a supreme being and creator called Temaukl or Xelas. In fact, he has many names, meaning things like One Above, Old One, Father, Good One, Murderer in the Sky, and Star.

Tengri Ulgen

See Ulgen below

Teotihuacan

Teotihuacan is the name applied to one of the great classical pre-Aztec (*See* Aztec) Mesoamerican (*See* Mesoamerican) civilizations that lasted from about 300 B.C.E. to about 600 C.E. It is also the name of that civilization's famous city of Pyramids not far from present day Mexico City. The city of Teotihuacan was one of the first major cities in the Americas.

Tepeu

One of the creator gods of the Central American Quiché Mayans, Tepeu's name is associated with the concept of kingship or sovereignty.

Tewa

The Tewa people are those Pueblo-based Native Americans of the Southwest who speak the Tewa language. They include the San Juan, Santa Clara, and San Ildefonso peoples as well as a group who migrated long ago to what is now the Hopi reservation in Arizona. (*See* Part II; Tewa).

Tezcatlipoca

In the mythologies of the Mesoamericans (*See* Mesoamericans), Tezcatlipoca (Tecciztecatl, "Dark Mirror Lord"), the jaguar, was a mysterious god whose magic mirror allowed him to explore the future as well as the hearts and minds of humans. Sometimes he opposed the popular Quetzalcoatl (*See* Quetzalcoatl). But in many versions of the Mesoamerican creation myth, he was the primary creator, a composite figure containing the "Four Tezcatlipocas"—the four creators and dominant gods of four of the creations, or suns. These were: Tezcatlipoca himself, Huitzilopochtli (*See* Huitzilopochtli), Quetzalcoatl, and Xipe Totec. The Aztecs learned the Tezcatlipoca myth from the Toltecs. (*See* Five Suns, Part II; Aztec, Toltec).

Thebes

Thebes is Greek name of the ancient Egyptian cult center in and around present day Luxor and Karnak. The name was taken from the famous Greek city of Thebes, a city best known for the king, Oedipus, who had the misfortune to kill his father and to marry his mother and produce children by her, all without, until later, realizing the nature of his sin.

Theogony

The 8th century B.C.E. *Theogony* by the poet Hesiod (*See* Hesiod) contains the best known version of the Greek creation myth. The title, *Theogony,* is derived from the Greek meaning "birth of" or "seed" of the gods. It is a collection of ancient tales about the gods, organized into a continuous narrative form that stresses divine genealogy. It begins with Gaia and Ouranos and moves to Kronos and Rhea and a war in Heaven and eventually to the rise of Zeus and his family and their subsequent adventures and problems. (*See* Part II; Greek).

Thinking Woman

Thinking Woman is an important goddess of many of the Pueblo people of southwestern Native North America. In Acoma she is a spirit figure who acts as a culture hero (*See* Culture Hero). In Laguna she is the creator who thinks things into existence. Her origins are the womblike underworld from which the people once emerged. At times Thinking Woman seems to be interchangeable with Spider Woman (*See* Spider Woman) She is also known in some places as "Prophesying Woman."(*See* Part II; Acoma, Laguna, Tewa)

Thunder

Thunder is one of the creators of both the California Cahto people and the Mescalero Apache. He is a personified natural source of power, a weather-storm god creator mythologically related to storm gods elsewhere such as the Norse (*See* Norse Mythology) Thor and the Canaanite Baal (*See* Baal).

Tiamat

Tiamat was the primal goddess of salt water seas who mated with the fresh water personification Apsu in Mesopotamian mythology. Their offspring were Ea and the other early gods. In the Babylonian (*See* Babylonian) creation epic, the *Enuma elish* (*See* Enuma elish), A dragon-like demon, representing primordial chaos Tiamat makes war on Ea and the other younger gods because Ea has killed Apsu. The hero Marduk, the embodiment of the highly patriarchal Babylonian ideal of order, cuts her in half, making of her body the source of creation. Part of her becomes the sky, part the earth. (*See* Animism, Part II; Babylonian).

Ti'i

The Polynesian creator, Taaroa (*See* Taaroa) conjured the first man out of the earth, out of himself. This man was Ti'i. He created the first woman, too. Her name was Hina (*See* Hina, Part II; Tahitian).

Tirawahat

The Plains Indian Pawnee say that in the beginning Tirawahat (Tirawa—space) organized the gods and the heavenly bodies in creation.

Titans

The Titans were the children of the earliest Greek deities Ouranos (Heaven) and Gaia (Earth). With the support of their mother and under the direction of Kronos (Saturn), they overthrew their father and Kronos became the chief god (*See* Gaia, Kronos and Rhea, Ouranos). Later, Zeus, in turn, supported by *his* mother Rhea, led the Olympians (*See* Olympians) in a war in Heaven—against Kronos and some of the Titans. After the defeat of the Titans, the rebels among them were thrown into Tartarus. Among the most important descendants of the Titans were Prometheus (*See* Prometheus) and who was made to hold up the world. (*See* Hesiod, Part II; Greek).

Tnatantja Pole

In the Aranadan creation of Aboriginal Australia, the *tnatantja* pole is a magic weapon or *tjurunga* of the ancestors.

To-Kabinana and To-Karvuvu

The Papua of New Britain in the Melanesian Pacific have a myth of two culture heroes, To-Kabinana and To-Karvuvu, who came out of the blood of a spirit and helped with creation.

Tomaiyovit and Tukmit

The California Luiseño tell how in the beginning the creator, Kevish-Atakvish (*See* Kevish-Atakvish) made a man, Tukmit, who was the sky, and a woman, Tomaiyovit, who was the earth.

Tonga-iti and Vatea

Tonga-iti and Vatea are to Polynesian gods in Tongan mythology who fought over a child. until they agreed to cut the child in two. Vatea made the top half the sun, and Tonga-iti made the second half the moon.

Torah

The *Torah* ("Law") is, technically the first five books—the *Pentateuch*—of the Hebrew Bible (*See* Bible) and is tra-

ditionally attributed to Moses. The composition and style of the *Torah,* however, suggest several sources. The earliest is referred to as the Yahwist author, or simply "J" (< the German Jahweh), because of his use of the name Yahweh for the creator god. "J" apparently wrote in southern Israel (Judah) during the early monarchy, that is, around 950 B.C.E. A rival document by an Elohist writer of "E", because of the use of the term Elohim for the high god, was written in northern Israel in about 850 B.C.E., although it clearly makes use of much older oral material. The material of J and E were combined in about 750 B.C.E. The Torah combined with several other books forms what is generally known in the Christian world as the "Old Testament." (*See* Bible).

Totem

The term "totem" refers usually to animals considered to be sacred protectors of a particular family, clan, or tribe, primarily in spirit-based, animistic cultures. The Nandi people of Kenya, for example are divided into totem clans. Hopi Indians might belong to the bear or Antelope or Parrot clans. Clans and their totems are sometimes said to have been initiated by the creator, as in the case of the Creek Indians. For some cultures the totem might be considered to be an ancestor animal. For the Ainu in Japan the Bear is a totem ancestor. Clearly one source of totemism is a longing for a mythical age when animals and humans are said to have lived peacefully together in a society in which animals often taught humans almost as culture heroes. Totem animals can play an important role in creation myths. For many of the Native North American tribes who have earth-diver creations—tribes such as the Iroquoians and the Cherokee—an important totem animal is the turtle, on whose back the world was formed.

Treng Treng

There were two essential powers in the Chilean Mapuche creation. They are embodied as serpents, Treng Treng (Tren Tren), the earth serpent, and Kai Kai (*See* Kai Kai), the water serpent.

Trickster

The trickster in world mythology is characterized by an ability to change shapes and by voracious appetites of all kinds, especially for food and women. He is immoral, or, at least, amoral, and he is frequently a thief. at times he uses his inventiveness, even his closeness to the creator, to help human beings as a de facto culture hero (*See* Culture Hero). More often his abilities and personality interfere with creation, however, a fact that results in such realities as pain and death.

Raven (*See* Raven), Coyote (*See* Coyote), and Iktome (*See* Iktome) are popular Native North American (*See* Native North American Mythologies) tricksters. In Africa some of the best known tricksters are Ananse, Legba, Eshu, and Dikithi. In ancient Sumer (*See* Sumer), Enki (*See* Enki) had trickster qualities, as did Hermes in ancient Greece. The Norse trickster was Loki (*See* Loki). The Polynesian trickster-hero Maui is phallic-oriented. The Central Asian Erlik is a ubiquitous trickster-devil. There are times when noble heroes can have trickster aspects. The Indian Lord

Krishna (*See* Krishna) is a trickster whose pranks usually can be interpreted metaphorically for moral purposes.

Tsichtinako

See Thinking Woman

Tu

This Polynesian—especially Maori—was born of earth and sky—Papa and Rangi, whose constant embrace left little room for creation between them. Tu advocated killing his parents rather than merely separating (*See* Part III; Separation of Heaven and Earth in Creation). According to some Polynesians, he turned his brothers into food for humans. (*See* Part II; Maori).

Tuatha de Danann

The Tuatha Dé Danann, are literally the "People of Dana." Dana was the ancient Mother goddess of the Celtic tradition that became Irish mythology. The Tuatha were gods with distinctly human traits. In the mythological history of the gradual creation of Ireland, they lived in Ireland before the arrival of the Milesians. They succeeded in defeating the pre-Celtic Firbolg and the Fomorian races but were themselves overcome by the Celtic Milesians and reduced to a position as fairies, *sidhe*—"people of the hills." (*See* Part II; Irish).

Tu-chai-pai

The Diegeños creator of California, Tu-chai-pai, created the earth as female and the sky as male.

Turtle

Turtle is a major figure in the earth-diver creation myths of the Iroquoian and other Native Americans. Typically, his back serves as the foundation for the newly created Earth, Turtle Island.

Twins

The Sacred twins first appear in Indo-European mythology as the Vedic Asvins and later as the Greek Diskouri and the Roman Romulus and Remus (*See* Romulus and Remus). But they exist in all parts of the world—in the mythology of the Dogon and Fon peoples, for instance (*See* Part II; Dogon, Fon). They are ubiquitous in the Americas, as well as, for instance in the Mayan tradition, where they are Hunahpu and Xbalanque, in Acoma, where they are the culture-hero (see above) sister twins, Iatiku ("Life bringer") and Nautsiti ("Full Basket"), and in Navajo mythology, where they are the culture hero brother twins, Nayenezgani (Monster Slayer) and Tobadzhistshini ("Born for Water"). In some cases, one twin is good, one bad, representing the duality of human nature and the world we live in. (*See* Part III; Twins in Creation).

Uchtsiti

Uchtsiti is the name of the creator of the Acoma people (*See* Acoma) of the American Southwest. Creation originated from a drop of his blood.

Udan

In some Mongolian myths, Udan represents the Buddha (*See* Buddha) and is the creator.

Ulgen

In many Central Asian mythologies Ulgen is a creator who sometimes is challenged or undermined by a devil/trickster (*See* Devil, Trickster) figure such as Erlik (*See* Erlik). (*See* Part II; Central Asian).

Unkulunkulu

Unkulunkulu, the Ancient One, is the Zulu creator. Nobody knows where he is now but it is said that he is in everything that is.

Upanishads

The Indian collections known as the *Upanishads* are a continuation of thought found in the earlier *Vedas* (*See* Vedas) and *Brahmanas* (*See* Brahmanas). They are sacred Hindu (*See* Hindu) texts that are concerned with the perennial search for the essence of existence. Upanishadic emphasis is on inwardness and spirituality and the differentiation between the self of the body and that of the true inner self, or *Atman* (the Brahman within; *See* Brahman). The *Upanishads* use myths as teaching tools. The *Brhadaranyaka Upanishad* tells the creation story that claims the universe began as Self or Atman in the body of the primal man Purusha (*See* Purusha). (*See* Part II; Indian)

Uranus

See Ouranos

Utctsiti and Naotsiti

Utctsiti and Naotsiti are the creator sisters working with Profesying Woman (*See* Profesying Woman) in the Laguna Pueblo creation myth of the American Southwest. They are equivalent to the sisters Iatiku and Nautsiti (*See* Iatiku and Nautsiti) of the Acoma Pueblo myth.

Utnapishtim

Utnapishtim (Ziusudra in Sumerian) was the flood hero in the Mesopotamian flood (see above) myth told in the Gilgamesh epic (*See* Gilgamesh). His depiction, like his myth, clearly influenced the concept of the Hebrew Noah (*See* Noah) and the biblical flood. Like Noah, Utnapishtim survived the deluge sent by an angry god by building a boat in which to ride it out. After the flood Utnapishtim was granted eternal life by the Enlil (*See* Enlil).

Vainamoinen

Vainamoinen is one of the heroes of the Finnish epic, the *Kalevala* (see above). An Orpheus-like musician-enchanter, he is also the creator-hero of an earth-diver (*See* Earth-Diver) or more commonly a cosmic egg (*See* Cosmic Egg) creation. Vainamoinen is said to have been born miraculously of a teal's egg, in effect a cosmic egg. (*See* Part II; Finnish).

Valhalla

In Norse mythology (*See* Norse Mythology), Valhalla was the great hall where brave fallen warriors and the gods celebrated in the land of the gods, Asgard (*See* Asgard).

Vedas

The *Vedas* are the four ancient Indian religious collections of the Samhita period (c. 2000–1100 B.C.E.). They are the *Rig Veda*, the *Atharva Veda*, the *Sama Veda*, and the *Yajur Veda*. The word *veda* means "knowledge," and the *Veda*, as a collective noun, has come to mean not only the four *Vedas* themselves, but various sacred commentaries on them, such as the *Brahmanas* (*See* Brahmanas) and the *Upanishads* (*See* Upanishads) compiled later.

Venus

Usually thought of as the Roman version of the Greek Aphrodite, Venus was, however, more serious than her Greek counterpart and, as the mother of Rome's founder, Aeneas, more important.

Vili and Ve

Vili, and Ve, with Odin (*See* Odin), were the Norse (*See* Norse) gods who sacrificed the giant Ymir (*See* Ymir) to create the world out of his body.

Viracocha

Pachacamac (*See* Pachacamac). The pre-Incan sun god and creator in South America, later, in Incan times, was sometimes called Viracocha (Wiraqoca). He was beyond comprehension, unnamed, indefinable.

Vishnu

The Hindu god Vishnu is one of the trinity that includes the "destroyer," Shiva (*See* Shiva) and the "creator," Brahma (*See* Brahma). Vishnu is the "preserver"; he preserves the order of the universe. Vishnu is depicted with his four arms, a conch, his flaming discus weapon, and the lotus. His steed is the eagle Garuda. His sh*akti*-consort is Sri (Lakshmi). For his worshippers Vishnu is the source of creation, who becomes incarnate when necessary in the form of several avatars (earthly embodiments), including Krishna (*See* Krishna) and Rama (*See* Rama). In his very being is the entire universe. Ultimately, he is the embodiment of the universal Absolute, Brahman (*See* Brahman). He is the true creator, and his consort Lakshmi is the creation, the manifestation of Vishnu's energy.

In the ancient *Rig Veda* it is he who, as Vamana, takes the giant steps by which Heaven and Earth are established.

The *Vishnu Purana,* a work of the late third or early fourth century C.E. tells of the creation of the universe by Vishnu, the navel of the universe. The *Purana* (*See* Purana) tells of Vishnu's incarnation as the Lord Krishna and of how the universe will be absorbed into Vishnu at the end of the age.

Vivahant

In the Zoroastrian (*See* Zoroastrian) tradition, Vivahant was a sun god-creator and a loyal follower of the great god Ahura Mazda (*See* Ahura Mazda).

Void

The Void is the ultimate nothingness before creation. As such it cannot be described. It is the *nothing*ness in which the ex nihilo (*See* Ex Nihilo) creator comes to consciousness and creates *some*thing. (*See* Part II; Ex Nihilo).

Wakan Tanka

The "Great Spirit" or the "Great Mystery," Wakan Tanka is the supreme deity and creator of the Native North American Sioux Indians (*See* Native North American Mythologies. Wakan Tanka is not a personalized god with associated myths. Rather, he (it) is an all encompassing spirit, a Brahman-like essence that pervades all things (*See* Brahman, Great Spirit, Part II; Sioux).

Wakara

Wakara, the Moon, is the enemy of Pun Miaupa and Halai Auna, the hero and heroine of the creation myth of the Yana Indians of California.

Wakonda

According to the Omaha Indians of Nebraska, in the beginning there was only Wakonda, the Great Spirit (*See* Great Spirit), and all things—plants, animals, and humans—were spirits in his mind. These beings longed for form, but they could only wander about in the space of God's mind, which is the space between Heaven and Earth.

Walam Olum

A Lenape Indian creation myth is included in a written work known as the *Walam Olum* (Red Book or Red Source), which has long been the center of a controversy as to its authenticity.

Walking About Early

A son of the creator in the Alaskan mythology of the Tsimshian people, Walking About Early made himself into the moon.

Wanblee

Wanblee, the eagle, married the only girl to escape the great flood and became the father of the Sioux nation, the "Eagle People."

Water Monster

In Navajo mythology, Water Monster is a god who causes a great flood. Coyote (*See* Coyote) steals his children.

Weather Gods

Weather gods or storm gods were ancient sky gods associated with the powers of the heavens. Zeus (*See* Zeus) with his thunderbolt is a weather god, as is the Norse Thor with his. The Canaanite (*See* Canaanite) Baal (*See* Baal) is a storm god associated with the cycle of draught and fertility. Storm/weather gods can cause floods. The creator of the Hebrew Bible (*See* Bible) can thus be called at least in part a storm or weather god. (*See* Part II; Anatolian).

Whe-me-me-ow-ah

Whe-me-me-ow-ah is the sky chief and creator god of the Yakima Indians of the Pacific Northwest.

White Body

White Body, Blue Body, Yellow Body, and Black Body were mysterious supernatural figures who visited and instructed the insect ancestors of the Navajo people before their final emergence into our world.

Wiyot

The creator of the Luiseño people of California, Wiyot was a culture hero (*See* Culture Hero), a sacrificial victim (*See* Sacrificial) and the moon.

Word

The Wapangwa people of Tanzania say that before there was a sun, a moon, or stars, there was the Word, which controlled everything, but the Word could not be seen. The Word was a catalyst

for creation. The Word is also the logos (*See* Logos), the reason that supports creation, in the Christian creation story of John.

World Center

See Axis Mundi

World Parent

The term "world parent" in creation myth can have one of two emphases. The term can refer to the being who is sacrificed or dismembered to become creation itself (For example, *See* Corn Mother, Tiamat) or it can refer to the Mother and Father of Creation—often Earth and Heaven, such as in the Egyptian myth of Geb and Nut (*See* Geb and Nut, Part II, Zuni creation).(*See* Part III; World Parent Creation).

World Tree

See Axis Mundi

Worm

In India the Dhammai and Gond peoples both tell stories of the worm as a source of creation. The creator, Mbir in the myths of the Guarani people of Brazil is a worm. In Samoa one myth suggests that people were made out of worms.

Woyengi

Woyengi is the creator in some myths of the Ijaw people of Nigeria.

Wulbari

For the Krachi people of Africa, in the beginning Wulbari (Heaven—male) lived on top of Asase Ya (Earth—female).

Wuraka

Waraka, the giant, was a creator-fertility ancestor of the Kakadu Aborigine people of Northern Australia. His fertility function is indicated by his enormous penis.

Xbalanque and Hunahpu

Xbalanque and Hunahpu were sacred twins (*See* Twins) and culture heroes (*See* Culture Hero) of the Maya. They were miraculously conceived.

Xipe Totec

An early Mesoamerican (*See* Mesoamerican) fertility god, Xipe Totec demanded human sacrifice For the Aztecs (*See* Aztecs) he was the ruler of the first sun or creation age. (*See* Part II; Aztec).

Xowalaci

Xowalaci was a creator in the mythology of the Joshua Indians of Oregon. In the beginning, before there was land—only the sky, flat sea, and fog—he lived in a sweat house on the primordial water.

Yahweh

The god (*See* God) of the Hebrews, too holy to name, was expressed in the form of the tetragrammaton, YHVH (usually transliterated as Yahweh or Yahveh), based on the verb to be. Thus he reveals himself to Moses (*See* Moses) as "I am". (*See* Hebrew).

Yeii

The Yeii are the Navajo version of the Native North American creator spirits of the Athabascan peoples. The Apache equivalent are the *Hactin* (*See* Hactin).

The Yei and the Hactin resemble the Hopi Kachina (*See* Kachina). The Yei appear in sand paintings and in rituals as masked dancers. They are personifications of natural powers and they play important roles in the Navajo Creation myth (*See* Part II; Navajo). Their leader is Talking God.

Yggdrasill

Yggdrasill is the cosmic ash, the World Tree, the *axis mundi* (*See* Axis Mundi) of Norse Mythology. It links the sections of the universe. The great god Odin hanged himself on Yggdrasill—literally Ygg's or Odin's horse (also meaning gallows)—for nine days and nights to learn the runic mysteries. (*See* Norse Mythology, Part II; Norse).

Yima

Yima was both the primal man and a solar and fertility god of the ancient Persians (Iranians). He became Jamshid in the later Zoroastrian (*See* Zoroastrian) tradition.

Yin-Yang

Yin (shadow) and *Yang* (brightness) are opposite energies in Chinese philosophy. In creation mythology they interact to produce *wu-hsing* (the five elements), which in turn produce the material world and space and time. *Yin* and *Yang* are the opposite boundaries of the absolute source of being, *t'ai-chi* (see Tai'i above). The famous *Yin-Yang* symbol stands for the coming together of the opposites that lead to the creation of the universe. The coming together is eternal, as indicated by the dark spot that is in the light *Yang* and the light spot that is in the dark *Yin.* Each contains the seed of the other and creates a renewed version of the other. *Yin* is feminine, passive, and accommodating. Yin is the moon, earth and wetness. *Yang* is masculine, active, and firm, the sun, the heavens, and dryness. (*See* Part II; Chinese).

Ymir

The giant who emerged at the meeting place of fire and ice at the time of the Norse creation, Ymir was androgynous, giving birth to the first man and woman from under the left armpit. Ymir's legs formed the frost-giants. Ymir drank from the four rivers of milk that came from the cow Audumla. Audumla licked the ice for three days, and eventually Buri appeared. Buri's son Bor married Bestla, the daughter of the frost-giant Bolthor, and the mother of the gods Odin, Vili, and Ve, who sacrificed Ymir to create the world out of his body. (*See* Norse Mythology, Part II; Norse creation)

Yomi

Yomi is the land of the dead in the Shinto mythology of Japan.

Yu

In China of Yu is considered to be the first emperor. He succeeded in ending the great flood. Sometimes he is seen as a dragon. Some say that Yu sprang as a great dragon from the body of his father. Sometimes Yu is known as the Jade Emperor. Yu is not to be confused with Yi, "the Excellent Archer," who was said to have shot down several superfluous suns.

Zambe

In the creation myth of the Bulu of Cameroon Membe'e (*See* Membe'e) sent his son Zambe to create Man, Chimpanzee, Gorilla, and Elephant, each of whom he named after himself.

Zephyrs

Zephyrs was the daughter of Sky Woman in the earth-diver creation of the Onondaga Iroquois. She assisted in the development of Earth.

Zeus

When Indo European (*See* Indo European) people now known as Hellenes arrived in the land we now call Greece, they brought a powerful sky god (*See* Sky Father) with them. This god was a storm and weather god who personified lightning and thunder, which is why he carried a thunderbolt. A mythological brother is the Norse (*See* Norse Mythology) Thor. As a weather god, Zeus also personified fertility, a fact indicated by his many sexual relationships with mortal women. Associated with the chief god of Crete, Zeus gained a particular personality as his mythology developed in Greece through Homer (*See* Homer) and Hesiod (*See* Hesiod) and others. He was said to be one of several children of the ancient gods Kronos and Rhea. When Kronos was overthrown by After defeating the older family of gods led by Kronos, Zeus became the leader of his family of gods, known now as the Olympians (see above), since they lived on Mount Olympus. The e Olympian gods reflected pre-Greek Mycenaean and later Greek family and court arrangements. Zeus was the *pater familias*, the ultimate decision-maker.

Ziusudra

See Utnapishtim

Zoroaster and Zoroastrianism

Zoroaster (Zarathustra), one of the most important prophets of the ancient world, lived in northeastern Iran, probably late in the second millennium B.C.E. His life's work involved the reinterpretation of the ancient Iranian religion. The result was the religious system we now call Zoroastrianism, based, as it is, on Zoroaster's preaching in the books called the *Gathas*. Central to Zoroastrianism is a the belief in an essential duality in the universe, represented by the Wise Lord Ahura Mazda (*See* Ahura Mazda) and the evil Angra Mainyu. Eventually, many myths developed around the life of the prophet, making him an archetypal (*See* Archetype) hero in the mythological sense. It was said that his mother Dughda dreamt that good and evil spirits were fighting for the baby in her womb. At birth the baby laughed. Wise men warned the wicked king, Duransarun that the child was a threat to his realm, and the king set off to kill the baby Zoroaster. Miraculously the would-be murderer's hand was paralyzed. When demons stole the child, they also failed to kill him; his mother found him peacefully sleeping in the wilderness. Later, the king sent a herd of oxen to trample his enemy, but the cattle took care not to hurt Zoroaster. The same thing happened when horses were sent to trample him. Even when the king had

two wolf cubs killed and had the baby Zoroaster put in their place in the den, the mother wolf's anger was quieted by God, and sacred cows were sent to suckle the child. In adulthood, Zoroaster was resented by followers of the old tradition, but he convinced many with his miraculous cures, and even though he was killed at an old age by soldiers while he was carrying out a ritual sacrifice, it is said that Zoroaster will one day return as a final prophet or *saoshyant*. (*See* Part II; Zoroastrian).

Zurvan

In Zoroastrianism (*See* Zoroastrianism), Zurvan is Time. In a cult known as Zurvanism, Zurvan was ultimate reality, the power behind even the Zoroastrian high god, Ahura Mazda.

Part V

Comparative Charts

Myths Categorized According to the Five Basic Types

Usually one type of creation is clearly predominant in a given culture's tradition. In the cases in which two or more types are significantly represented in the predominant myth, the cultures appear in more than one list. There are also cases in which a myth straddles the border between ex nihilo and creation from chaos myths or creation from chaos and world parent myths, and many cases in which a culture has several creation traditions of different types. Cultures may be included in more than one list accordingly.

Ex Nihilo Creation Myths

Arandan (Aruntan)
Ashanti
Assyrian
Aymaran
Baluba
Basonge
Batak
Big Bang
Blackfoot (Siksika)
Bon (Bonpo)
Boshongo
Bulu
Bushmen (San, Basarwa)
Canaanite
Cheyenne
Christian
Chukchee
Creek (Muskogee)
Dinka
Efik
Egyptian
Ekoi
Fang (Fan)
Fon
Gnostic
Guarani
Hebrew

Inca
Indian
Inupiat (Inupiaq)
Ipurina (Apurina)
Islamic
Jain
Kagaba
Kikuyu
Kono
Kootenay (Kutanai, Ktunaxa)
Kukulik
Laguna (Kawaik)
Lenape (Delaware)
Lugbara
Maasai
Malozi (Lozi, Alyui, Barotse)
Mande
Maori
Mapuche
Mariana Islands
Marshall Islands
Mayan
Muysca (Muisca)
New Hebrides
Ngombe (Bangala)
Nugumit
Nup
Nyamwezi
Omaha
Pawnee
Penobscot
Polynesian
Pomo
Romanian (Rumanian)
Samoan
San Cristobal
Scientific
Sikh
Snohomish
Sumu
Swahili
Tahitian
Talmudic
Tantric
Thompson Indians
Tierra del Fuego
Toltec
Tuamotuan
Uitoto
Ute
Wahungwe
Welsh
Winnebago
Wyot
Yaruro
Yolugu
Zapotec
Zuni

Creation from Chaos Myths

Achomawi
Ainu
Apache
Arandan (Aruntan)
Babylonian
Baltic
Bambara

Banks Islands
Bon (Bonpo)
Buddhist
Cahto (Kato, Kaipomo)
Chinese
Cuebo
Cupeño (Kuupanqaxwichen)
Dogon
Dyak (Dayak)
Efe
Egyptian
Finnish (Finno-Ugric)
Fulani
Gnostic
Gond
Greek
Guarani
Haida
Hawaiian
Ijaw (Ijo)
Inca
Indian
Inupiat (Inupiaq)
Irish
Japanese (Shinto)
Kakadu
Kodiak
Kokowarra
Kono
Korean
Lao
Luiseño
Malagasy
Mande
Mixtec
Mongolian
Mosetene
Nandi
Netsilik
New Britain
Nez Perce
Ngurunderi
Olmec
Persian (Iranian)
Phoenician
Polynesian
Roman
Samoan
Scientific
Shilluk
Skagit
Solomon Islands
Sumerian
Tahitian
Talmudic
Tlingit
Tsimshian
Tungus
Turkic (Pre-Islamic Turkish)
Vietnamese
Wapangwa
Yami
Yanomami
Yuki
Yoruba
Zoroastrian
Zulu
Zuni

World Parent Creation Myths

Algonquin
Anatolian
Aztec (Mexica)
Babylonian
Bon (Bonpo)
Celtic
Ceram
Chinese
Dhammai (Miji)
Diegeños
Dogon
Egyptian
Gilbert Islands
Greek
Hawaiian
Hittite
Hottentot
Indian
Japanese (Shinto)
Jivaro (Shuar)
Kodiak
Kokowarra
Krachi
Lapp (Sami)
Minyong
Negritos
Nez Perce
Norse
Okanagan (Isankuafli)
Oqomiut
Papago (Tohono O'odham)
Penobscot
Polynesian
Pomo
Shilluk
Sioux
Snohomish
Sumerian
Tantric
Thompson Indians
Tonga
Truk Island
Tsimshian
Wahungwe
Yana
Yao
Zuni

Emergence Creation Myths

Acoma (Aa'ku)
Apache (Jicarilla)
Arikara
Aymaran
Hopi
Kiowa
Kokowarra
Laguna (Kawaik)
Modoc
Munduruc
Navajo (Dine)
Netsilik
Pima (Akimal O'okham)
Pueblo People
Sioux
Tewa
Yaruro
Yuma (K-Wichhna)

Zia
Zuni

Earth-Diver Creation Myths

Ainu
Altaic
Anishinabe (Ojibwe, Chippewa)
Arapaho
Assiniboine
Batak
Birhor
Bloods
Buriat
Cherokee (Tsalagi)
Crow (Absarkoes, Apsaalooke)
Fiji Islands
Finnish (Finno-Ugric)
Garo (Achik)
Gond
Hungarian (Magyar)
Huron
Indian
Joshua (Tce'metun)
Kukulik
Lenape (Delaware)
Maidu
Mandan
Miwok
Modoc
Mohawk (Kanienkaha)
Mongolian
Oneida
Onondaga
Osage
Romanian (Rumanian)
Salinan
Samoyed
Seneca (Onödowåga')
Siberian
Tuscarora
Wyandot
Yakima
Yokut
Yoruba
Yuchi (Tsoyaha)

Themes and Motifs Frequently Associated with the Five Basic Types

Ex Nihilo Creation

Bodily Waste or Fluids as Creation Source
Clay-based Creation
Deus Otiosus or Absconditus
Devil in Creation
Fall from Grace
Father God as Creator
Flood in Creation
Humans, Creation of
Mateless Creator
Monotheism
Monotheism
Void as Place of Creation
Word or Thought based Creation

Creation from Chaos

Cosmic Egg in Creation
Humans, Creation of
Primal Mound in Creation
Primordial Waters in Creation

World Parent Creation

Ancestors in Creation
Animistic Creation
Dismemberment of Primordial Being as Creation
Humans, Creation of
Separation of Heaven and Earth in Creation
Sexual Impulse in Creation
Sky Father and Earth Mother in Creation

Emergence Creation

Animals in Creation
Axis Mundi
Birth as Creation Metaphor
Culture Heroes
Four Directions
Goddess as Creator
Humans, Creation of

Earth-Diver Creation

Animals in Creation
Devil in Creation
Duality in Creation
Humans, Creation of
Primordial Waters in Creation
Sky Woman Descends
Trickster in Creation
Two Creators Motif

Myths Characterized by Particularly Popular Themes and Motifs

Ages in Creation

Aztec (Mexica)
Greek
Hopi
Indian
Iroquoian
Navajo (Dine)
Roman
Toltec

Ancestors in Creation

Acoma (Aa'ku)
Arandan (Aruntan)
Aymaran
Dogon
Fang
Garo (Achik)
Gond
Guarani
Hebrew
Inca
Japanese (Shinto)
Kakadu
Kikuyu
Kodiak
Korean
Lao
Lenape (Delaware)
Maasai
Mande
Mayan
Navajo (Dine)
Nez Perce
Ngurunderi
Salishan (Flat Heads)
Sioux
Tewa
Yanomami

Yolugu
Yuma (K-Wichhna)

Animals in Creation

Achomawi
Ainu
Altaic
Anishinabe (Ojibwe, Chippewa)
Apache
Arandan (Aruntan)
Arapaho
Assiniboine
Bambara
Batak
Birhor
Blackfoot (Siksika)
Bloods
Boshongo
Bulu
Buriat
Bushmen
Cahto (Kato, Kaipomo)
Cherokee (Tsalagi)
Chukchee
Creek (Muskogee)
Crow (Absarkoes, Apsaalooke)
Cuebo
Cupeño (Kuupanqaxwichen)
Dhammai (Miji)
Dyak (Dayak)
Egyptian
Fang
Fiji Islands
Finnish (Finno-Ugric)
Fon
Garo (Achik)
Gilbert Islands
Gond
Guarani
Haida
Hawaiian
Hebrew
Hopi
Hungarian (Magyar)
Huron
Indian
Inupiat (Inupiaq)
Jivara
Kiowa
Kodiak
Kootenay (Kutanai, Ktunaxa)
Korean
Krachi
Kukulik
Laguna (Kawaik)
Lenape (Delaware)
Lugbara
Maidu
Malozi (Lozi, Alyui, Barotse)
Mandan
Mapuche
Mayan
Miwok
Mixtec
Mohawk (Kanienkaha)
Mongolian
Mosetene
Munduruc
Nandi
Navajo (Dine)

Negritos
Netsilik
New Hebrides
Nez Perce
Ngombe (Bangala)
Ngurunderi
Nup
Okanagan (Isankuafli)
Olmec
Oneida
Onondagan
Oqomiut
Osage
Papago (Tohono O'odham)
Pima (Akimal O'okham)
Polynesian
Pueblo People
Roman
Romanian (Rumanian)
Salinan
Salishan (Flat Heads)
Samoan
Samoyed
San Cristobal
Seneca (Onödowåga')
Shilluk
Siberian
Siberian-Tartar
Snohomish
Solomon Islands
Sumu
Tewa
Tlingit
Toltec
Truk island
Tsimshian
Turkic (Pre-Islamic Turkish)
Tuscarora
Ute
Vietnamese
Wahungwe
Wapangwa
Wyandot
Wyot
Yao
Yaruro
Yoruba
Yuchi (Tsoyaha)
Yuma (K-Wichhna)
Zulu
Zuni

Animistic Creation

Dismemberment myths are generally animistic.

Algonquin
Apache
Arandan (Aruntan)
Aztec (Mexica)
Babylonian
Bon (Bonpo)
Celtic
Ceram
Dhammai (Miji)
Dogon
Dyak (Dayak)
Finnish (Finno-Ugric)
Garo (Achik)
Gilbert Islands

Huron
Indian
Japanese (Shinto)
Jivaro (Shuar)
Kodiak
Mande
Marshall Islands
Nez Perce
Norse
Okanagan (Isankuafli)
Omaha
Oneida
Oqomiut
Penobscot
Polynesian
Pomo
Tahitian
Thompson
Tonga
Yolugu
Zapotec
Zulu

Axis Mundi and World Center in Creation

Emergence Myth emergence locales are world centers.

Arandan (Aruntan)
Batak
Birhor
Christian
Dyak (Dayak)
Gilbert Islands
Hebrew
Indian
Luiseño
Maidu
Mandan
Negritos
Nez Perce
Norse
Olmec
Salishan (Flat Heads)
Tungus
Wapangwa

Birth as Creation Metaphor

Emergence type myths are birth metaphors.

Acoma (Aa'ku)
Apache (Jicarilla)
Arikara
Banks Islands
Hopi
Kiowa
Kodiak
Laguna (Kawaik)
Modoc
Munduruc
Navajo (Dine)
Papua New Guinea
Pueblo People
Sioux
Tewa
Yao
Yaruro
Yuma (K-Wichhna)
Zia
Zuni

Bodily Waste or Fluids as Creation Source

Acoma (Aa'ku)
Baltic
Boshongo
Ceram
Chukchee
Egyptian
Gond
Indian
Kodiak
Kokowarra
New Britain
Uitoto
Wapangwa
Winnebago
Yanomami

Clay-based Creation

All earth-diver myths also may be included in this category.

Apache
Arapaho
Assyrian
Aymaran
Babylonian
Basonge
Birhor
Blackfoot (Siksika)
Bloods
Buriat
Cahto (Kato, Kaipomo)
Chinese
Crow (Absarkoes, Apsaalooke)
Diegeños
Dinka
Dogon
Dyak (Dayak)
Efe
Fang
Garo (Achik)
Greek
Hebrew
Hopi
Ijaw (Ijo)
Inca
Inupiat (Inupiaq)
Jivaro (Shuar)
Joshua (Tce'metun)
Maidu
Malagasy
Maori
Mayan
Mongolian
Mosetene
Negritos
Nez Perce
Okanagan (Isankuafli)
Oneida
Papago (Tohono O'odham)
Pima (Akimal O'okham)
Polynesian
Salishan (Flat Heads)
Shilluk
Solomon Islands
Sumerian
Swahili
Talmudic
Winnebago

Yokut
Yuma (K-Wichhna)

Cosmic Egg in Creation

Baltic
Bambara
Banks Islands
Batak
Bon (Bonpo)
Chinese
Dogon
Egyptian
Finnish (Finno-Ugric)
Greek
Hawaiian
Indian
Japanese (Shinto)
Lao
Mande
New Britain
Phoenician
Samoan
Scientific
Tahitian
Yami
Zulu

Coyote in Creation

Achomawi
Crow (Absarkoes, Apsaalooke)
Cupeño (Kuupanqaxwichen)
Kootenay (Kutanai, Ktunaxa)
Maidu
Mayan
Miwok
Navajo (Dine)
Nez Perce
Okanagan (Isankuafli)
Papago (Tohono O'odham)
Pima (Akimal O'okham)
Pueblo People
Salinan
Ute
Yokut
Yuki
Yuma (K-Wichhna)

Creation Myths as Curing

Babylonian
Bon (Bonpo)
Christian
Fiji Islands
Navajo (Dine)

Culture Heroes in Creation

Acoma (Aa'ku)
Ainu
Algonquin
Anatolian
Anishinabe (Ojibwe, Chippewa)
Apache
Arapaho
Arikara
Banks Islands
Blackfoot (Siksika)
Bloods
Ceram
Cherokee (Tsalagi)
Cuebo

Cupeño (Kuupanqaxwichen)
Fulani
Garo (Achik)
Gond
Guarani
Hopi
Inca
Inupiat (Inupiaq)
Joshua (Tce'metun)
Kikuyu
Kiowa
Korean
Lao
Lenape (Delaware)
Luiseño
Mandan
Mande
Mayan
Modoc
Mosetene
Muysca (Muisca)
New Britain
New Hebrides
Okanagan (Isankuafli)
Onondaga
Papago (Tohono O'odham)
Penobscot
Pomo
Tewa
Tiega de Fuego
Tlingit
Vietnamese
Winnebago
Yakima
Yanomami
Yaruro
Yolungu
Yuma (K-Wichhna)
Zulu

Death Origin in Creation

Basonge
Blackfoot (Siksika)
Ceram
Dinka
Efe
Efik
Fang
Fulani
Hebrew
Indian
Krachi
Maidu
Malagasy
Nup
Nyamwezi
Tahitian
Tlingit
Wahungwe
Yuma (K-Wichhna)

Deus Faber Creation

Apache
Cahto (Kato, Kaipomo)
Cherokee (Tsalagi)
Chinese
Dogon
Egyptian
Hebrew
Malagasy

Mayan
Polynesian
Romanian (Rumanian)
Uitoto
Yuki

Deus Otiosus or Absconditus

Bushman (San, Basarwa)
Dinka
Fiji Islands
Guarani
Inupiat (Inupiaq)
Japanese (Shinto)
Joshua (Tce'metun)
Kikuyu
Malozi (Lozi, Alyui, Barotse)
Nandi
Ngombe (Bangala)
Papago (Tohono O'odham)
Yao
Zulu

Devil in Creation

Achomawi
Ainu
Altaic
Assiniboine
Buriat
Crow (Absarkoes, Apsaalooke)
Hebrew
Huron
Inupiat (Inupiaq)
Lenape (Delaware)
Maidu
Mande
Ngombe (Bangala)
Oneida
Romanian (Rumanian)
Samoyed
Siberian
Siberian-Tartar
Tungus
Turkic (Pre-Islamic Turkish)
Tuscarora
Ute
Yuma (K-Wichhna)
Yurucare

Dismemberment in Creation

Algonquin
Aztec (Mexica)
Babylonian
Bon (Bonpo)
Celtic
Ceram
Chinese
Dhammai (Miji)
Gilbert Islands
Greek
Indian
Mande
Nez Perce
Norse
Oqomiut
Penobscot
Tonga

Dreaming as Creation

All the Australian Aborigine creations.

Duality in Creation

Trickster, Devil, and Two Creator motifs generally imply duality.

Achomawi
Algonquin
Altaic
Aztec (Mexica)
Banks Islands
Bon (Bonpo)
Buriat
Christian
Gnostic
Greek
Hebrew
Hottentot
Huron
Ijaw (Ijo)
Jivaro (Shuar)
Lenape (Delaware)
Maasai
Mande
Mongolian
New Britain
Oneida
Onondaga
Romanian (Rumanian)
Seneca (Onödowåga')
Tuscarora
Wyandot
Yuma (K-Wichhna)
Zoroastrian

Etiological Myths

All creation myths are to some extent etiological.

Altaic
Apache
Arandan (Aruntan)
Aztec (Mexica)
Babylonian
Blackfoot (Siksika)
Bon (Bonpo)
Boshongo
Bulu
Buriat
Creek (Muskogee)
Crow (Absarkoes, Apsaalooke)
Dogon
Dyak (Dayak)
Fang
Jivaro (Shuar)
Kakadu
Krachi
Maidu
Ngurunderi
Nup
Pawnee
Salishan (Flat Heads)
Tsimshian
Wahungwe
Yolugu
Yuma (K-Wichhna)

Fall from Grace in Creation

Altaic
Anishinabe (Ojibwe, Chippewa)
Apache
Arandan (Aruntan)
Arikara
Aymaran

Creek (Muskogee)
Dinka
Efik
Egyptian
Fang
Gond
Hebrew
Ipurina (Apurina)
Irish
Krachi
Lenape (Delaware)
Malozi (Lozi, Alyui, Barotse)
Mande
Mayan
Muysca (Muisca)
Navajo (Dine)
Nyamwezi
Pomo
Roman
Sumerian
Toltec
Wahungwe
Wapangwa
Wyot
Yakima
Yana
Yao
Yuma (K-Wichhna)
Yurucare

Father Creators

Acoma (Aa'ku)
Anatolian
Apache
Arandan (Aruntan)
Babylonian
Baluba
Basonge
Bulu
Canaanite
Celtic
Cherokee (Tsalagi)
Christian
Chukchee
Dhammai (Miji)
Dogon
Efik
Fiji
Finnish (Finno-Ugric)
Gilbert islands
Greek
Guarani
Hopi
Hungarian (Magyar)
Indian
Japanese (Shinto)
Jivaro (Shuar)
Kakadu
Kono
Korean
Krachi
Lapp (Sami)
Lenape (Delaware)
Lugbara
Luiseño
Maasai
Maidu
Malagasy
Malozi (Lozi, Alyui, Barotse)
Mandan

Maori
Mapuche
Minyong
Mixtec
Modoc
Mosetene
Navajo (Dine)
Negrito
New Hebrides
Nez Perce
Ngombe (Bangala)
Ngurunderi
Oneida
Onondagan
Oqomiut
Osage
Papago (Tohono O'odham)
Pawnee
Penobscot
Persian (Iranian)
Pima (Akimal O'okham)
Polynesian
Salishan (Flat Heads)
Samoan
Seneca (Onödowåga')
Shilluk
Sumerian
Tahitian
Tlingit
Tsimshian
Vietnamese
Whaungwe
Wyot
Yolugu
Zuni

Flood in Creation Myths

Anishinabe (Ojibwe, Chippewa)
Apache
Arandan (Aruntan)
Arikara
Aymaran
Babylonian
Cahto (Kato, Kaipomo)
Cheyenne
Chinese
Egyptian
Fang
Gond
Greek
Hebrew
Ipurina (Apurina)
Irish
Lao
Lenape (Delaware)
Mandan
Mande
Mapuche
Mayan
Miadu
Mixtec
Muysca (Muisca)
Navajo (Dine)
Netsilik
Norse
Pima (Akimal O'okham)
Pomo
Roman
Salinan
Sioux
Sumerian

Tlingit
Toltec
Wapangwa
Wyot
Yakima
Yana
Yuma (K-Wichhna)
Yurucare

Four Directions in Creation

Anishinabe (Ojibwe, Chippewa)
Apache
Cahto (Kato, Kaipomo)
Chinese
Diegeños
Lenape (Delaware)
Mande
Marshall islands
Mayan
Navajo (Dine)
New Hebrides
Norse
Omaha
Pawness
Pomon
Winnebego
Yuki
Yuma (K-Wichhna)

Goddess as Creator

Acoma (Aa'ku)
Anatolian
Assyrian
Aztec (Mexica)
Babylonian
Batak
Bon (Bonpo)
Cherokee (Tsalagi)
Chinese
Chukchee
Dyak (Dayak)
Egyptian
Fon
Greek
Hopi
Ijaw (Ijo)
Irish
Japanese (Shinto)
Kakaba
Kakadu
Laguna (Kawaik)
Mohawk (Kanienkaha)
Penobscot
Polynesian
Scientific
Sumerian
Tantric
Tewa
Truk Island
Yaruro
Yolungu
Zapotec
Zia

Imperfect Creation

Arandan (Aruntan)
Aymaran
Baluba
Boshongo
Bugabo

Fulani
Guarani
Inupiat (Inupiaq)
Joshua (Tce'metun)
Maidu
Mande
Mayan
Mongolian
Pima (Akimal O'okham)
Pomo
Romanian (Rumanian)
San Cristobal
Sumerian
Talmudic
Wyot
Yuma (K-Wichhna)

Incest in Creation

Acoma (Aa'ku)
Dogon
Egyptian
Gond
Greek
Inca
Indian
Jivaro (Shuar)
Lugbara
Luiseño
Mande
Navajo (Dine)
Ngombe (Bangala)
Persian (Iranian)
Polynesian
Tonga
Wahungwe
Wyot
Yaruro
Yolugu

Origin of Evil

See also Fall from Grace, Death Origin, Woman as Source of Evil and Devil in Creation Myths.

Buriat
Creek (Muskogee)
Maidu
Wahungwe

Primordial Waters in Creation

Achomawi
Ainu
Altaic
Anishinabe (Ojibwe, Chippewa)
Apache
Arapaho
Assiniboine
Aztec (Mexica)
Babylonian
Batak
Birhor
Bon (Bonpo)
Buddhist
Buriat
Cherokee (Tsalagi)
Dyak (Dayak)
Egyptian
Finnish (Finno-Ugric)
Garo (Achik)
Gond
Hungarian (Magyar)

Huron
Indian
Mohawk (Kanienkaha)
Mongolian
Papago (Tohono O'odham)
Penobscot
Romanian (Rumanian)
Samoa
Seneca (Onödowåga')
Skagit
Sumerian
Thompson
Tuamotuan
Turkic (Pre-Islamic Turkish)
Tuscarora
Yao
Yokut
Yoruba
Yuchi (Tsoyaha)
Zuni

Raven in Creation

Chukchee
Haida
Inupiat (Inupiaq)
Kodiak
Kukulik
Salinan
Sumerian
Tlingit
Tsimshian
Yokut

Sacrifice as Creation

See also Dismemberment myths.

Anishinabe (Ojibwe, Chippewa)
Assyrian
Babylonian
Bambara
Ceram
Chinese
Christian
Greek
Huron
Indian
Kikuyu
Mande
Oqomiut
Penobscot
Tonga
Yanomami

Separation of Heaven and Earth

Celtic
Dhammai (Miji)
Diegeños
Egyptian
Ekoi
Gilbert Islands
Gond
Greek
Hebrew
Indian
Japanese (Shinto)
Korean
Krachi
Maori
Mariana Islands
Mayan
Minyong

Mongolian
Mosetene
Navajo (Dine)
New Hebrides
Papago (Tohono O'odham)
Polynesian
Roman
Snohomish
Solomon Islands
Sumerian
Vietnamese
Zuni

Sexual Impulse in Creation

See also Separation of Heaven and Earth Myths.

Anatolian
Batak
Chukchee
Crow (Absarkoes, Apsaalooke)
Dhammai (Miji)
Dogon
Efik
Egyptian
Gnostic
Greek
Hawaiian
Hebrew
Hopi
Indian
Japanese (Shinto)
Javaro
Joshua (Tce'metun)
Kakadu
Kikuyu
Kiowa
Kono
Laoo
Lenape (Delaware)
Luiseño
Maidu
Mayan
Minyong
Mixtec
Navajo (Dine)
Netsilik
New Hebrides
Ngurunderi
Oqomiut
Pawnee
Penobscot
Persian (Iranian)
Polynesian
Roman
Sious
Sumerian
Talmudic
Tantric
Tonga
Wahungwe
Wyot
Yana
Yanomami
Yaruro
Yolugu
Yuma (K-Wichhna)
Zuni

Shamanism in Creation

Bon (Bonpo)
Chukchee

Navajo (Dine)
Netsilik
New Hebrides
Pomo
Thompson
Tungus
Yana
Yaruro

Sky Woman Descends to Earth

Batak
Cherokee (Tsalagi)
Huron
Kiowa
Mohawk (Kanienkaha)
Oneida
Onondaga
Seneca (Onödowåga')
Tuscarora
Wyandot

Sun in Creation

Acoma (Aa'ku)
Apache
Arandan (Aruntan)
Aymaran
Aztec (Mexica)
Banks Islands
Birhor
Boshongo
Cherokee (Tsalagi)
Cuebo
Dyak (Dayak)
Egyptian
Fon
Guarani
Hopi
Hungarian (Magyar)
Inca
Indian
Ipurina (Apurina)
Japanese (Shinto)
Jivaro (Shuar)
Kiowa
Kukulik
Lapp (Sami)
Lenape (Delaware)
Malozi (Lozi, Alyui, Barotse)
Minyong
Muysca (Muisca)
Osage
Pueblo People
Scientific
Sioux
Sumu
Toltec
Tonga
Tsimshian
Yaruro
Yuchi (Tsoyaha)
Zapotec
Zuni

Thought-based Creation

Achomawi
Acoma (Aa'ku)
Arandan (Aruntan)
Arapaho
Crow (Absarkoes, Apsaalooke)
Diegeños
Hebrew
Hopi

Indian
Laguna (Kawaik)
Lenape (Delaware)
Maori
Mariana Islands
Mayan
Negritos
New Hebrides
Omaha
Pomo
Tuamotuan
Uitoto
Winnebago
Wyandot
Yolugu
Zuni

Trickster in Creation

Achomawi
Ainu
Algonquin
Altaic
Anishinabe (Ojibwe, Chippewa)
Ashanti
Assiniboine
Baluba
Banks Island
Basonge
Buriat
Chukchee
Crow (Absarkoes, Apsaalooke)
Cupeño (Kuupanqaxwichen)
Guarani
Haida
Hebrew
Inupiaq
Kodiak
Kootenay (Kutanai, Ktunaxa)
Kukulik
Maidu
Miwok
Modoc
Mongolian
Navajo (Dine)
Okanagan (Isankuafli)
Papago (Tohono O'odham)
Pima (Akimal O'okham)
Samoyed
San Cristobal
Siberian
Siberian-Tartar
Tlingit
Tsimshian
Turkic (Pre-Islamic Turkish)
Ute
Yokut
Yuma (K-Wichhna)

Twins in Creation

Acoma (Aa'ku)
Algonquin
Banks Islands
Batak
Chukchee
Dogon
Guarani
Hopi
Huron
Kiowa
Laguna (Kawaik)

Lenape (Delaware)
Mande
Mayan
Mixtec
Navajo (Dine)
New Britain
New Hebrides
Oneida
Onondaga
Papago (Tohono O'odham)
Roman
Sioux
Tewa
Tuscarora
Yuma (K-Wichhna)
Zia

Two Creators

See also Trickster Myths, Devil in Creation.

Achomawi
Ashanti
Baluba
Banks Islands
Basonge
Cahto (Kato, Kaipomo)
Chukchee
Crow (Absarkoes, Apsaalooke)
Dyak (Dayak)
Ekoi
Huron
Lenape (Delaware)
Maasai
Malagasy
Mandan
Mayan
Mongolian
New Britain
Oneida
Papago (Tohono O'odham)
Pima (Akimal O'okham)
Romanian (Rumanian)
San Cristobal
Seneca (Onödowåga')
Tuscarora
Yoruba

Woman as Source of Evil in Creation

Blackfoot (Siksika)
Boshongo
Dinka
Efik
Greek
Hebrew
Indian
Nyamwezi

Word-based Creation

Bon (Bonpo)
Christian
Crow (Absarkoes, Apsaalooke)
Egyptian
Hebrew
Hopi
Indian
Irish
Islam
Maori
Mayan

Netsilik
Samoa
Swahili
Talmudic
Tuamotuan
Wapangwa
Welsh
Yuki
Yuma (K-Wichhna)

Myths Listed by Region and General Culture Area

Occasionally cultures are included in more than one list, representing their dual heritage. Egyptian mythology, for example, is of Africa but also is profoundly related to the cultures of what we now call the Middle East. Iranian (Persian, Zoroastrian) mythology has common roots with Aryan mythology in India and, at the same time, is related to the mythologies of the Middle East.

Africa

Ashanti
Baluba
Bambara
Bantu
Bashongo
Basonge
Bulu
Bushmen
Dahomey
Dinka
Dogon
Efe
Efik
Egyptian
Ekoi
Fang
Fulani
Guinean
Hottentot
Ijaw (Ijo)
Kikuyu
Kono
Krachi
Lugbara
Maasai
Mali
Malozi (Lozi, Alyui, Barotse)
Mande
Nandi
Ngambe
Nigerian
Nup
Nyamwezi
Pygmy
Shilluk
Swahili
Wahungwa
Wapangwa
Yao
Yoruba
Zulu

Europe

Baltic
Big bang

Celtic
Christian
Finnish (Finno-Ugric)
Germanic
Greek
Hungarian (Magyar)
Icelandic
Irish
Lapp (Sami)
Norse
Pelasgian
Roman
Romanian (Rumanian)
Scientific
Welsh

Middle East

Anatolian
Assyrian
Babylonian
Biblical
Canaanite
Christian
Egyptian
Gnostic
Hattian
Hebrew
Hittite
Hurrian
Iranian
Islamic
Jewish
Mesopotamian
Persian (Iranian)
Talmudic
Zoroastrian

South Asia

Birhor
Brahmanic
Buddhist
Dhammai (Miji)
Garo (Achik)
Gond
Hindu
Indian
Iranian
Jain
Minyong
Persian (Iranian)
Sikh
Tantric
Vedic
Zoroastrian

Southeast Asia

Bagobo
Batak
Ceram
Dyak (Dayak)
Iban
Indonesian
Lao
Malagasay
Molucca Islands (Spice Islands)
Negritos
Palawan
Philippine Islands
Vietnamese

East Asia

Ainu
Bon (Bonpo)
Buddhist
Chinese
Japanese (Shinto)
Korean
Shinto
Tibetan
Yami

Central Asia

Altaic
Buriat
Central Asia
Chukchee
Mongolian
Samoyed
Siberian
Siberian-Tartar
Tungus
Turkic (Pre-Islamic Turkish)

Arctic North America

Eskimo
Inuit
Inupiat (Inupiaq)
Kodiak
Kukulik
Netsilik
Nugumui
Oqomiut

Mid North America

Achomawi
Acoma (Aa'ku)
Algonquin
Anishinabe (Ojibwe, Chippewa)
Apache
Arapaho
Arikara
Assiniboine
Big bang
Blackfoot (Siksika)
Bloods
Cahto (Kato, Kaipomo)
Cherokee (Tsalagi)
Cheyenne
Creek (Muskogee)
Crow (Absarkoes, Apsaalooke)
Cupeño (Kuupanqaxwichen)
Diegeños
Haida
Hopi
Huron
Iroquoian
Joshua (Tce'metun)
Keres
Kiowa
Kootenay (Kutanai, Ktunaxa)
Laguna (Kawaik)
Lenape (Delaware)
Luiseño
Maidu
Mandan
Miwok
Modoc
Mohawk (Kanienkaha)
Native North American
Navajo (Dine)
Nez Perce

Ojibwe
Oneida
Onondagan
Osage
Papago (Tohono O'odham)
Pawnee
Penobscot
Pima (Akimal O'okham)
Pomo
Pueblo People
Salinan
Salishan (Flat Heads)
Scientific
Seneca (Onödowåga')
Shoshonean
Sioux
Skagit
Snohomish
Tewa
Thompson
Tlingit
Tsimshian
Tuscarora
Ute
Winnebago
Wyandot
Wyot
Yakima
Yami
Yokut
Yuchi (Tsoyaha)
Yuki
Yuma (K-Wichhna)
Zia
Zuni

Mesoamerica

Aztec (Mexica)
Mayan
Mesoamerican
Mixtec
Monte Alban
Olmec
Quiché Mayan
Teotihuacán
Toltec
Zapotec

South America

Aymaran
Cuebo
Guarani
Inca
Ippurina
Jivaro (Shuar)
Kagaba
Mapuche
Mosetene
Munduruc
Muysca (Muisca)
Sumu
Tierra del Fuego
Uitoto
Yanomami
Yaruro
Yurucare

Oceania

Arandan (Aruntan)
Australian Aborigine

Banks Islands
Fiji Islands
Gilbert Islands
Hawaiian
Kakadu
Kokowarra
Maori
Mariana Islands
Marshall Islands
Melanesia
Micronesian
New Britain
New Hebrides
Ngurunderi
Papua New Guinea
Polynesian
Samoan
San Cristobal
Society Islands
Solomon Islands
Tahitian
Tonga
Truk Island
Tuamotuan

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An introduction to pre-Columbian history and culture in Mesoamerica.

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A historical and philosophical study of the development of monotheism and the concept of deity as practiced and proclaimed by the Abrahamic religions. Useful in connection with the biblical creation myth.

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A survey of pre-Islamic Indian culture.

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A highly useful and wide-ranging exploration of Native American mythology according to basic concepts and subjects, such as "Why Stories" and "The Girls

Who Married a Bear." Creation myths are included.

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A collection of translated creation myths from many areas of the African continent.

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A useful dictionary of myths from around the world.

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A collection of Australian myth and legend with analysis by distinguished anthropologists, first published in Australia in 1988.

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A major study of Native North American mythology of major areas, with extensive commentary and the retelling of myths, including creation myths.

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An introduction to mythology based on the parallel existence of mythic types and themes from various parts of the world. Included among the tales are creation myths from India, Iran, Scandinavia, North America, Africa, China, Japan, and the Middle East.

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The classic work on the universal hero archetype and the monomyth.

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A classic study of world mythology in its primitive, "Oriental" (Egypt, India,

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A study by a leading expert on Mesoamerica of the history and world views of Mesoamerican cultures, emphasizing the Aztecs and the Mayans, including their creation stories.

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This series remains the major work on all aspects of religion—including mythology—from around the world. Volume 4 contains an essay on "Cosmogony" by Charles Long, including a definition of the five major creation myth types.

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A short but wide-ranging book on the nature of myth and its relation to the reality of the modern world.

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For Eliade, secular humanity of our age sees time as linear while archaic humans saw it as cyclical, making it possible for events such as creation stories to constantly return as an energizing force.

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Eusebius (c 263—339) was Bishop of Caeserea in Palestine. He was a Christian church historian who also had an interest in the transmission of Phoenician mythology.

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A classic Jungian approach that demonstrates the common motifs in the creation myths of many cultures and relates these motifs to the human psyche.

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See *Totem and Taboo* below. Freud reasserts the "primal horde" theory here.

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Freund, Philip. *Myths of Creation*. New York: Washington Square Press, 1965.

A creative study of parallels in creation mythology around the world including those found in the Bible, the Hindu scriptures, and the Mesopotamian epic of Gilgamesh.

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Frye's archetypal criticism is applied to literary, mythological, religious, and philosophical issues.

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This is an accessible version of the great Welsh collection of mythological tales.

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Gimbutas, Marija. *The Goddesses and Gods of Old Europe: Myths and Cult Images,* revised edition. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1892.

This book fully develops the theory of the matriarchal aspect of early European mythology and religion.

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A useful study of the creation from chaos theme in Taoist thought.

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Gleiser traces the philosophical, religious, and scientific approaches to creation mythology for the past 2500 years.

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The emphasis in this book, a tracing of the movement from the idyllic world of Eden to the fallen world of Babylon, is

less on history than on the effect of these stories on society today.

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The title speaks for itself.

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A major source of information on Dogon mythology—at least from one religious teacher's point of view.

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A classic compilation and discussion of mythology arranged according to large cultural areas of the world.

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A study of the development of the Greek view of creation from the mythological to more rational understandings.

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An illustrated collection of selected creation myths from around the world. Highly suitable for children.

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Translations of the primary Mesopotamian texts relating to creation.

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